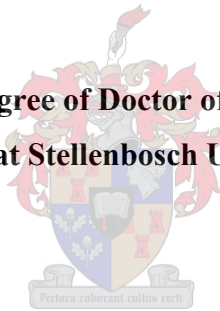


Historicising Borders: Studies in Nigerian Novels

By

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English at Stellenbosch University**



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DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights, and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

More than ever before, border studies is enjoying scholarly attention and cutting across many disciplinary boundaries. The re-shaping of borders, triggered by globalisation and other trans-border historical events, has brought about the reassessment of the notion of borders as more than physical demarcations. Nonetheless, there has been little contribution from studies of African scholarship, and almost none from Nigeria, to the growing concern with and re-imagining of the border. My thesis provides an alternative imagining of the border by examining fictional representations of bordered identities foregrounded in the three generations of Nigerian literature. From the perspective of border poetics, which is the intervention of arts and culture in border studies, my research examines a range of fictional novels that thematise historical concerns related to geographical, cultural, ethnic, and social divides.

The primary texts for this research are: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976), Festus Iyayi's *Violence* (1979) and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer* (2012), and Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* (2016). This study engages three dimensions of borders and bordering in the novels selected: first, borders as social constructs drawn between opposing ideologies; second, borders as fluid and complex forms of intervention in social life; and third, borders as sites of frictional exchange and transformative interaction between the individuals and territories that are divided by these social constructs. The thesis is particularly preoccupied with literary characters' ability to negotiate their identity in the encounter with socially and culturally created divides and the spatial shifts that attend these forms of division. By engaging novels that speak to the national concerns prevalent in different periods of Nigerian literary history, my research demonstrates how literary texts conceptualise and engage the lived experience of shifting borders, and the cultural and social distinctions that attend the historical changes in Nigeria from the colonial era to the present. This study provides insights that can potentially enlarge the scope of border studies from the perspective of the humanities and recast the traditional assumption of the border as a fixed geographical divide. Most importantly, my thesis argues for border inclusivity, achievable through a radical delinking from the mentality of superiority and fixity. It suggests an expanded notion of difference as part of a solution to the crisis of cultural and symbolic othering in Africa, and in the world at large.

OPSOMMING

Tans geniet studies ten opsigte van grense, baie meer akademiese aandag as vantevore en word verskeie vakgebiede daardeur betrek. Die herdefiniëring van grense, globalisering, asook historiese gebeurtenisse oor grense heen, het tot gevolg gehad dat die definisie van grense nie meer as bloot fisiese afbakening van lande gesien word nie. Daar is egter min bydraes, van studies gedoen in Afrika en bykans geen gedoen in Nigerië, ten opsigte van die groeiende veranderings, bekommernisse en herooring van die definisie van grense nie. My proefskrif bied 'n alternatiewe beeld van die grens, deur die fiktiewe voorstelling van begrensde identiteite, deur drie generasies van Nigeriese literatuur te ondersoek. Wanneer daar gekyk word na die poësie wat die aspek van grense aanspreek en ook deur te kyk na die impak van kuns en kultuur in grens-studies, ondersoek my navorsing 'n verskeidenheid van fiksie en romans met die tema om die historiese bekommernisse met betrekking tot geografiese, kulturele, etniese, en sosiale afbakening aan te spreek.

Die primêre tekste vir hierdie navorsing is as volg: Chinua Achebe se 'Things Fall Apart' (1958); Chukwuemeka Ike se 'Sunset at Dawn' (1976); Festus Iyayi se 'Violence' (1979); Okey Ndibe se 'Arrows of Rain' (2000); Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie se 'Americanah' (2013), Chika Unigwe se 'Night Dancer' (2012) en Elnathan John se 'Born on a Tuesday' (2016). Hierdie proefskrif het betrekking op drie aspekte van grense en die proses wat gevolg is om grense vas te stel, met betrekking tot die bogenoemde boeke. Eerstens, grense as sosiale skeiding tussen twee opponerende ideologieë. Tweedens, grense as dinamiese en gekompliseerde ingryping in sosiale omstandighede. Derdens, grense as plekke van wrywing wisseling en die interaksies wat transformasie veroorsaak tussen individue en die grondgebiede wat geskei is deur hierdie sosiale verskille. Hierdie proefskrif lê klem op literêre karakters se vermoë om te onderhandel oor hulle identiteit, tydens hulle interaksie op die plek of stadium waar met sosiale en kulturele skeidings en die ruimtelike verskuiwing wat bydra tot hierdie vorme van skeiding. Deur te kyk na literatuur wat handel met die nasionale kommer in spesifieke tydvakke in Nigerië se literêre geskiedenis, ontbloeit my navorsing hoe literêre geskrifte die veranderende grense uitbeeld, en die ervaring en ondervindinge van die veranderende grense, asook die sosiale en kulturele verskille wat die historiese verandering in Nigerië onderskei in die verskillende tydperke vanaf die koloniale era tot huidig. Hierdie studie gee dus insig, wat die potensiaal het om die omvang van grens-studies te vergroot, uit 'n geesteswetenskaplike oogpunt en ook om die tradisionele aanname van 'n grens as 'n vaste geografiese skeiding te heroorweeg. My proefskrif argumenteer vir grens inklusiwiteit, wat

bereikbaar is deur radikale ontkoppeling van die mentaliteit van meerderwaardigheid. Dit stel voor dat idee van verandering uitgebrei word as 'n deel van 'n oplossing tot 'n kulturele krisis en simboliese uiteensetting in Afrika en in die res van die wêreld.

DEDICATION

To the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary

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To Him who sits on the throne and unto the Lamb, be blessings and glory and honour and power forever and ever, Amen! I owe everything to God who has made this doctoral journey a grand success. I thank the ever-blessed Mary, the Mother of Mercy; her maternal assistance never failed.

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I acknowledge the support of my religious congregation, the Daughters of Mary, Mother of Mercy (DMMM); my biological family, especially my parents; and my never-failing friends. I say thank you for your permission, support, and love that made staying away from home very possible. To my mentors, may God bless you all: Prof. Chielozone Eze, I thank you specially for holding me accountable for the growth of the genius in me. Thank you for seeing this genius and believing it; Prof. David Attwell and Prof. Johan Schimanski, I acknowledge your insightful engagement with my ideas at the early stage of this study. Prof Schimanski's very cordial and academic discussions with me at the 2018 Association of Borderlands Studies' World Conference was a significant boost to my research.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background

This thesis offers a study of three generations of Nigerian literature from the perspective of border poetics¹. It is a historicization of the changing borders and bordering as captured in the Nigerian novels. By the term border, I relate not only to physical territorial divides but most importantly to the inclusionary and exclusionary effect of social constructs. Also, by discussing the border from the literary perspective, I respond to the call for a continued re-imagining of the border that shifts the definitional limits of the border beyond the political nation-state divide and geographical territory. So, this thesis brings Nigerian literature into the broader conversation on the border by analysing some selected Nigeria novels using the framework of border poetics. In particular, by foregrounding narrative and symbolic boundaries, this study investigates the following theses: that symbolic borders are analogous to traditional territorial lines in their divisive function; that borders are fluid and complex forms of intervention in social life; and that borders are sites of multiple interaction, exchanges and crossings.

To examine these symbolic borders and the relation of borderline positions² to identity, my study frames its investigation around selected novels that address the major concerns of the three historical generations of Nigerian writing. The selected texts are: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976), Festus Iyayi's *Violence* (1979) and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000)³, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer* (2012) and Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* (2016). The novels are both purposively and randomly selected. Purposively, their selection is based on the different historically ordered corpus of Nigerian novels and on the need to discuss border, social differences and the movement along the imaginary topography created by these

¹ Border poetics is the intervention of arts and culture in the study of the border. Border poetics examines and analyses "the processes of border-making and border permeability in contemporary society through aesthetic forms" <http://borderpoetics.wikidot.com/border-poetics>. Border poetics as a concept will be expanded later on in this chapter.

² A space or place of decision between the self and the "other". It is the point at which trespassing or transgression can be imagined (Bunia 373).

³ Though the publication of Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* coincides with the onset of the third-generation writing, the author is a renowned artist of the second generation. The text itself aptly engages the concern of the second generation (civic strife and injustice) and has been reviewed, by Ernest Emenyonu, author of *Tales of our Motherland*, as "a blueprint for the second generation of African novelists".

differences. However, the selection of texts within each generation is slightly random for the fact that they are selected among texts that may also be amenable to border poetics reading. These novels representing the three writing periods reflect historical experiences such as the colonial encounter, the struggle for autonomy, the bloody civil war of 1967-1970, political unrest, unprecedented corruption, massive emigrations, and the present menace of religious insurgency resulting from unchecked religious fundamentalism. All these topical national experiences tend to create strategic us/them, insider/outsider, included/excluded dichotomies.

By engaging novels that speak to prevalent national concerns, the study looks at how texts⁴ conceptualise and engage the lived experience of the cultural and social distinctions in different periods of Nigerian literary history from the colonial era to the present. Such national concerns provide insights that can enlarge the scope of border studies from the humanities by recasting the traditional assumption of the border as a fixed geographical divide, due to the fact that these constructs occasion constant bordering, rebordering, and debordering. This study also highlights that borders in Nigeria (and elsewhere in Africa) function differently to the kinds of borders conventionally discussed in established scholarship on borders – in Africa, borders are marked in unique ways by the heterogeneity of social and cultural constructs like language, ethnicity, class, gender, and religion. This is mostly due to the complex, shifting, and entangled nature of borders in Africa as a consequence of a historically specific form of colonialism. Thus, the study suggests an alternative imagining of borders – one that considers the complex, the embodied, and the psycho-social experience of maintaining or resisting a delimited identity while living in a border zone. By presenting the historical continuum of difference and its detrimental effect, the study calls for a deemphasising of difference in service of individual self-determination and national unity. It promotes a delinking from the mentality of superiority in order to embrace ‘border inclusivity’.

⁴ The term “text” in this study is interchangeably used with “novel”.

Literary Periodisation in Nigeria

Nigerian literature has evolved constantly since its inception. Diachronically, it has developed through three generations classified according to temporal coevality, the historical moment of the text's publication, or the subject matter. Denoting colonialism as the central determinant of the generations, Pius Adesanmi⁵ and Chris Dunton⁶ contend that the first-generation and the second-generation writers were born within the colonial period, while the third-generation writers were not. They hold that the encounter with colonialism informs the first and the second generations' respective concerns over the Nigerian experience of colonialism and the disappointment of neo-colonialism; unlike the third generation, whose thematic concerns reflect contemporary societal ills ("Nigeria's Third Generation Writing" 14). Similarly, to Adesanmi and Dunton, Taye Awoyemi-Arayela also describes the generation based on their relatedness to colonialism. He asserts that the writing of the first generation responds to colonial identity distortion and presents a reassertion of Nigerian identity, while the second-generation writings are informed by the aftermath of colonialism and post-independence disillusionment which resulted from the pseudo-exit of the white man who "metamorphosed in black-white masters" (Awoyemi-Arayela 33). The first-generation writings therefore highlight national and patriotic concerns driven by the responsibility to remap and reassert distorted national and ethnic identity. Within the first-generation literary space, there is also a shift of concern from the nationalistic to the ethnic – a shift caused by the Nigerian-Biafran civil war, which heightened Nigerian citizens' ethnic consciousness, thereby eroding the traction of national interest. Referring to the birth of new concentration in literary representation, Harry Garuba states:

Between 1967 and 1970s, a three-year civil war almost tore the nation apart. After the war, the old narratives of 'nation' and community inherited from anti-colonial nationalism could not survive in the same form as previously. The country had witnessed such fratricidal conflict and violence that those founding narratives simply collapsed; new narratives had to be constructed and new explanations proffered. In the presence of the obscene, fragmented body of the nation, a race for new suturing threads

⁵ I pay a special tribute to Pius Adesanmi who died in my final year (10th March 2019) in an Ethiopian Airlines plane crash. His was a critic whose works on the Nigerian literary generation were very foundational to this study.

⁶ Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton edited two special issues in *English in Africa* (2005) and *Research in African Literature* (2008) that for the first time paid close attention to the definition and content of the third generation of Nigerian writers ("Nigeria's Third Generation" 14).

began. Instead of the undivided nation, home and mother of all, the nation was now said to be made up of different classes, a class of exploiters and the exploited class. (Garuba 59-60)

Garuba's view delineates the Nigerian civil war as both catalytic to the shift within the first generation writing and the introduction of the second literary generation. While writings on the Nigerian-Biafran civil war continued after the war, a revolution occurred in literature that shifted the focus to an engagement with the everyday lives of ordinary people – the second generation of writers.

The emergence of “class of exploiters and the exploited class” is related to the rapid increase of revenue and money in the Nigerian economy after the discovery of oil in the early 1960s, which led to unprecedented corruption and a widening socio-economic gap. This historical moment foregrounded a spatial shift from the rural to the urban, which echoed the radical increase in the number of Nigerian cities. Furthermore, the ideological break away from national concerns and patriotism resulted to a more accessible literature. Femi Osofisan describes this accessibility by second generation writers as a conscious disassociation “from the posture and pronouncements of their predecessors [in order] to create an art that would be accessible to the large majority of the Nigerian public, rather than to a cultured and privileged few” (164). Hence, writers of the second generation, such as Festus Iyayi, Bode Sowande, Kole Omotosho, Sonala Olumhense, Femi Osofisan, and Ben Okri, in reaction to societal decay took to revolutionary literature, “moving far away from cultural nationalism and cult of the reconstruction of our history” (Nnolim 58).

Towards the end of the millennium a new wave of Nigerian literature began to emerge, propelled by globalisation, transnational migration, and global unrest. While the preceding generations were more or less group focused – the first generation on the nation, and the second on society as a divided whole – the third generation foregrounds the individual person. Adesanmi and Dunton acknowledge that third-generation writing underscores “deprivation, ... the denial of individual human rights and aspirations, and ... the degradation of social relations under a series of increasingly despotic and corrupt regimes” (“Nigeria's Third Generation Writing” 11). Also located in an urban setting, the third-generation writers present and challenge hegemonic cultural systems such as patriarchy, gender, and racism, thereby reconsidering culture from the individual's perspective. In line with these arguments, Chielozone Eze affirms that the third literary generation engages a “transcultural remapping of the monocultural idiom” of the previous generations (“Cosmopolitan Solidarity” 104).

In contrast to earlier generation writing such as Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966), *Idu* (1970) and Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), the novels of the third generation present a more radical remapping of the place of women in society. Third-generation female characters are portrayed as more independent than those of the first generation, who are entangled in the demands of childbirth – especially giving birth to a male child. According to Charles Nnolim, Nwapa hinders the total emancipation of her female characters with their unhappiness and despair at their childlessness, which indicates “the biological and cultural traps [that] bind the women inexorably to the men” (59). The third generation, unlike the first, presents the possibility of a total liberation of women – even from the chains of childbirth and from considering the child a marital necessity.

Despite the somewhat neat periodisation schema outlined above, the yardsticks for categorising literary works in Nigeria into generations have remained a scholarly concern (Adesanmi and Dunton, “Nigeria’s Third Generation Writing” 2005; Garuba 2005; Adéèkó, “Power Shift” 2008; Awoyemi-Arayela 2013). While there seems to be a consensus on the first generation of Nigerian writing being centred around the colonial experience, bearing “the stamp of the liberated spirit of the Nigerian masses from colonial bondage”, engaging “culture-contact and culture-conflict”, and mostly set in the rural area (Awoyemi-Arayela 32-33; Nnolim, “Trends in the Nigerian Novel” 56), there is, however, a discrepancy regarding its temporality. Critics such as Adesanmi and Dunton opine that this generation includes the Negritude writers of the 1930s - 1940s and the nationalists of 1950s - 1960s, such as Amos Tutuola, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clark, Flora Nwapa, and Christopher Okigbo (Adesanmi and Dunton, “Nigeria’s Third Generation Writing” 14; Hewett 76; Nnolim 56). But, for Obi Nwakanma, the first generation is the interval between Tutuola’s publication of *The Palm Wine Drinkard* in 1952 and 1970, which is the “period covering Nigeria’s nationalist movement, its emergence as a nation, and its crisis as a post-colonial nation marked by the beginning and end of the Nigerian civil war” (3). With regards to the second generation’s temporality, Osofisan considers the writers to be those born in the 1940s (164), while Heather Hewett (2005) and Nwakanma (2008) describe them as those who engage the historic moment of the post-civil war from 1970 -1980.

The controversy of description also applies more readily to the third generation because of the multifaceted themes engaged. Though there seems to be an agreement that the originality of this generation resides in its incorporation of the first- and second-generations’ ideas and style (Awoyemi-Arayela 34) and its focalising of contemporary issues such as the assertion of the

individual person, there has been continuous critical debate about the parameters used to circumscribe this generation. Hamish Dalley, for instance, challenges Adesanmi and Dunton's description of the third generation as spanning from the mid-1980s and engaging the societal ills of the independent nation. He strongly contends the spatio-temporal confinement of the third-generation Nigerian literature into "nation [space]" and "generation [time]" in his analysis of Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *I Do Not Come to You by Chance* and Teju Cole's *Open City* – both published within the third generation, in 2009 and 2011 respectively. Dalley argues that these texts, as well as others of the generation, generate time and space that transcends their inclusion into the third-generation paradigm (16). In his critique of generational fixity, Dalley therefore suggests an alternative consideration and classification of texts based on their ability to locate themselves in multiple spaces and times simultaneously.

These controversies typify a sense of ambiguity about literary classification. The parameters, as Dalley practically exemplifies, are either too limiting or too inclusive. Garuba agrees that these timelines result in more of a blurring effect than clarification, since "writers who should be within the period by the nature of their preoccupations and styles fall outside and others within very clearly pronounce their unbelonging in their work" (51). In the same vein, Hewett warns that categorisation exposes us to the risk of "searching for cultural purity, dissolving historical difference and excluding texts because they do not fit into our categories" (76). As far back as 1989, Nnolim considered the periodisation of Nigerian literature a risk that achieves a superimposition of literary events on a temporality that is in a continuous, directionless state of flux (54). Nnolim argues that, although a concentration of historical events within a given time seems to mark its literary concern, insisting on literary fixity to historical timelines reduces literature to a mere reflection of historical events.

Considering the fact that there is no consensus yet about this literary categorization, and that defining the limits of a literary generation can never be "mutually exclusive" nor "escape the problem of semantic, thematic, and even ideological indeterminacy" (Osofisan 166; Adesanmi and Dunton, "Nigeria's Third Generation Writing" 13), I regard the divisions of the three literary generations in Nigeria as flexible. For me, the categorizations are not final but functional. I agree with Adesanmi and Dunton that they remain "one of the cornerstones of literary criticism; an approach which assists in systematic understanding of literary trends and currents, synchronically and diachronically" (Adesanmi and Dunton, "Nigeria's Third Generation Writing" 13). Furthermore, because literary categorisations are not sacrosanct but

employed for critical convenience (as Adesanmi reiterates in his interview⁷), I adopt the three-generation classification as a heuristic tool for the selection of texts in this study. Particularly, my choice of texts stems from the correspondence of the texts' thematic concerns to the historical moments of the generations, rather than the temporality (age of writers and the year of publication). This choice is predicated on the fact that among the determinants of the generations raised so far – thematic concerns, historical moments, year of publication, and birth year of the author – thematic concerns in relation to the historical moment addressed by the text provide a greater degree of consistency and topical focus.

My classification of the literary writings considers as central the thematic concern of writers. I consider as first-generation Nigerian writing the texts which project the concerns of the pre-independent period and the civil war. They comprise nationalist texts with a thematic focus on constructing national identity and communal sacrifice as necessary for the life of the nation. First-generation novels offer explicit opposition to the world-view and standards of the colonialists. The texts in this category continued by engaging the subsequent complexity of the inter-ethnic tension that finally led to the Nigerian-Biafran war. Hence, these texts present the imaginaries of both national (cultural) and ethnic bordering. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976) are the representative texts to be analysed within this literary space as symbolic border narratives. The rationale for this choice will be expanded on later in Chapter Two.

The second-generation writings are the activist texts with thematic concern on post-colonial disillusionment and societal decay. The second generation emphasises post-colonial disillusionment evident in what Adéèkó describes as the "treasonable betrayals of the inheritors of political power", unprecedented corruption, and civil strife ("Power Shift" 20; Awoyemi-Arayela 33). Regarding the second generation, Emmanuel Obiechina affirms that the new political class of this second generation proved unequal to the challenge of nation-building, and was incapable of providing moral and civic leadership (*Language and Theme* 121). Abuse of power and economic opportunity created socio-economic and political stratification. Festus Iyayi's *Violence* (1979) and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000), the primary texts for analysis in this space, offer rich material for investigating the class border and bordering tensions. The two texts recreate the two dominant class struggles of this generation: the economic and the political respectively. While *Violence* focalises social decadence and distinctions heightened

⁷ "Of Generations and Limits: Pius Adesanmi in Conversation with Nnorom Azuonye" Sentinel Poetry (Online), no. 54. http://www.sentinelpoetry.org.uk/0607/adesanmi_interview.htm.

by excessive corruption, *Arrows of Rain* explores politically induced social distinctions and a system of total silencing of the less privileged. *Arrows of Rain* exposes the cause of the mass exodus of journalists and other social activists (mostly writers) who challenged the dictatorial tendency of the Nigerian government. The emigration caused by both corruption and the threat by the government occasioned a transcultural and transnational encounter for the writers, invariably introducing another wave of concern in the succeeding generation.

I consider the third-generation writings to be those whose thematic concern borders on contemporary issues, including identity remapping and reassertion, transnational migration, globality, and displacement (Adéèkó "Power Shift" 12; Awoyemi-Arayela 34). Adéèkó attributes the emigrational focus of this generation to the military dictatorial administration in Nigeria, which ended with President Sani Abacha's regime in 1998, ushering in a seemingly democratic dispensation at the dawn of the twenty-first century (15). Furthermore, fictional works in this era, more than ever, foreground the identity of the individual person by questioning the stereotypical structures of inclusion and exclusion associated with racism, gender, and religion. Encounters with the West and the racial divides experienced by most of the writers became material for their writing. A reading of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer* (2012), and Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* (2016) as border fictions of this generation shows their engagement of the shifting spaces of identity construction. These texts are typical of the third generation in that they are individually oriented. They expose the human person pitted against society and its structures and the individual's processual emancipation from the clutches of societal demands. The third generation further underscores multi-perspectival moments in the sense that its subject matter is as multitudinous as the issues that beset the local and global society; hence, Sim Kilosho Kabale agrees that there is neither rigidity of form nor a singleness of genre about the third generation (25). Recently, some of the writers of this generation have recreated current problems facing the nation, such as religious insurgency. With the continued rise in threats by the Boko Haram⁸ insurgency, writers as literary activists are lending their voice through fiction to the increasing effect of religious extremism on national cohesion.

The selected texts of this study highlight questions of bordering, rebordering, and debordering made possible by shifting social and symbolic conditions in Nigerian history. The texts bring

⁸ Boko Haram is an insurgent group in the north-eastern part of Nigeria whose date of foundation has been debated to be between 1995 and 2002 (Gray and Adeakin 2015: 189; Pieri and Zenn 2016:71). The name Boko Haram loosely translates to "western education is forbidden, ungodly, sinful". It is founded by Mohammed Yusuf. The group believes that it is on a jihad mission to propagate the unadulterated teaching of Prophet Mohammed.

into conversation the trajectories of Nigerian histories in relation to a diachronic process of bordering: from colonialism and the ethnic unrest of the first generation, through the neo-colonialism and socio-political injustice/inequality of the second generation, to the narrative complexity and individualism of the contemporary time. They highlight how these histories function as sites where identity is constructed and negotiated.

Border Studies and Literature

Historically, early studies on borders and boundaries which originated in the discipline of geography concentrated on physical maps and the lines that separated national and state territories. These physical divides are indicators of the security consciousness of nations and states (Kolossoff 607; Paasi, "Boundaries as Social Processes" 70; Newman, "The Lines That Continue to Separate Us" 145). Physical territory claims and border demarcations resulting from geographical rivalries such as those among European powers and the US-Mexico border remained the focus of border studies as the discourse developed (Bustamante 485). However, by the 1980s, the re-shaping of borders – triggered by globalisation, which involves transactions and movements between nations and across borders, increasing communication technology, cyberspace, international trade, and many other trans-border events – challenged the fixity of borders as material structures and consequently extended border studies from the legal and geopolitical to cultural and social realities (Paasi, "Bounded Spaces" 2009; Calderon and Saldivar 1991; Bustamante 1992; Baud and Schendel 1997; Saldivar 1997; Anderson and O'Dowd 1999).

The growth of the supra-state regions such as the African Union (AU), Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union (EU), and the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), facilitated movement and transactions among member nations and brought about further reconsideration of borders as more than physical demarcations (Anderson and O'Dowd 594). Rethinking the border inspired a reconsideration that highlights its symbolic aspects and the major impacts that borders have on the way human society is ordered, organised, and compartmentalised, as a marker of both social inclusivity and exclusivity (Kolossoff and Scott 1; Baud and Schendel 214-215). Seeing borders beyond mere divisions on maps, fixed and tangible territorial boundary mapping captures the social substance of the border, its convoluted contemporary mutations, and its increasingly ephemeral and impalpable nature (Bernes 7; Parker and Vaughan-Williams, "Critical Border Studies" 729; Parker and Vaughan-Williams, "Lines in the Sand?" 583). The scholarly engagement of the border from

disciplines other than physical geography is considered a welcome development in the advancement of border studies (Kurki and Laurén 114).

In Africa, the history of borders and boundary mapping is traceable to historical claims to the African continent by European states at the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 (Herbst 674; Shepperson 36). Colonial mapping of Africa has been described as random, illogical, and superimposed (Asiwaju, *Boundaries* 543; Newman, "The Lines That Continue to Separate Us" 146; Herbst). Jeffery Herbst, although arguing that the African borders have become rational as it presently serves the political needs of African leaders, acknowledges that the borders are nevertheless political map; the aftermath of the Berlin Treaty, practically completed by 1919. He admits that the creation of these borders which became a clear description of the spatial boundaries in Africa were carried out without demographic, ethnographic, or topographic consideration, and aimed at perpetuating the European imperial project (Herbst 674). Scholarly representation of African boundaries by African writers became very prominent during the era of African Independence in the 1950s, when most African countries, on the verge of or having won their independence, came to realise the inadequacy of "colonially arranged boundaries" (Asiwaju 5) and decided to tell their stories themselves.

Border studies in Africa, responding to the need for Africans to tell their own stories, went beyond describing physical boundaries to engaging the impact of the arbitrary boundaries on individual African states. Rapid growth occurred in scholarly publications that traced nation-state problems and cross-border relations in Africa and was facilitated by events such as the establishment of the African Union in 1963, the founding of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975 and the East African Community (EAC) in 1967, the establishment of the first Centre for African Regional Integration and Border Studies (CARIBS) in 2001, and the creation of the African Borderlands Research Network (ABORNE) in June 2007. ABORNE in particular is very scholarly in scope, enabling interdisciplinary research on all aspects of the African border – the physical, the social, and the trans-boundary exchanges.

The regionalisation of border studies and the diversified perspective of considering borders have contributed to the multidisciplinary approach to investigating and understanding the border. Border studies has continued to grow over the past four decades, despite the difficulty of developing a theory of the border that covers the interests and perspectives of the various disciplines involved in border discourse (Paasi, "Bounded Spaces" 2009: 223; Ackleson 2003: 579; Newman, "Boundaries" 2003b: 134). Nevertheless, while research towards developing a

theory of the border remains ongoing, insights on borders and border-crossings, in general, provide tools and conceptual frameworks for border analysis. In line with the debate on the theory of border, Anssi Paasi suggests that one of the ways out is to see theory as conceptualisation. By this suggestion, he recommends that “rather than fixed ideas, our theorizations on boundaries should be flexible heuristic instruments that could be used and re-conceptualized further in various empirical settings” (Paasi, “Bounded Spaces” 223).

In literature as a discipline, analysis of the border (otherwise called “border poetics”) considers movement through physical and symbolic divides within the text and in the textual world. Border poetics is specifically literature’s intervention in the discourse of the border. It involves an explication of the various forms of border representations in the literary text. According to Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe, key theorists of border poetics, border poetics focuses “primarily on the connections between the borders in the presented world of the text and the borders which mark the text itself as a spatial representation. This comprises all forms in which border can be projected, namely “topographical, symbolic, temporal, epistemological, and textual” (Schimanski and Wolfe, “Imperial Tides” 2007: 217; Schimanski and Wolfe, “Cultural Production” 2011; Schimanski and Wolfe, “Entry Points” 2007; Schimanski, “Crossing and Reading” 2006; Schimanski, “Reading from the Border” 2017). Within the entanglement of these planes, border poetics critically examines the representation of boundary formation and identity negotiation with regards to different territories and spaces of belonging.

This thesis considers more the mappings of symbolic difference represented in Nigerian novel. Beyond the physical mappings of nationality and ethnicities, I discuss the texts’ presentation and representation of the conceptual borders of the private and the public spaces, the inside and the outside, the “there” and the “here”. I examine the representation of characters whose lives in the different spaces manifest the categories to which they belong and/or to which they are forced to belong and the contestation that happens at the interstices of these symbolic spaces. With the analytic tools of border poetics which envisions the details of identity negotiation, I examine the mechanisms of bordering, rebordering and debordering in relation to the roles the characters play as occupants of symbolic territories and as borderlands in themselves.

Schimanski elsewhere explains that border poetics “is any approach to texts which connect borders on the levels of *histoire*, the world the text presents to the reader, and of *récit*, the text itself, a weave of rhetorical figures and narrative structures” (“Crossing and Reading” 51). *Histoire* and *récit* – which, according to Schimanski, are terms coined by Gerard Genette – can be translated as *story* and *discourse*. These two concepts suggest the two spaces that are of

crucial importance in border poetics: the presented space (that is the story, or the world presented in the text) and the space of presentation (that is the text as a spatial space in itself). It is within these two spaces that the different planes (symbolic, topographical, epistemological, temporal) and scales (national, urban, corporeal, ethnic, class) of borders, bordering and border crossings can be manifested. The selected novels, therefore, will be analysed using the paradigms of border poetics that considers these different planes and scales of border formation, interaction and crossings.

The importance of a literary approach to border studies lies in its ability to capture the details of identity formation and the possibilities and intimacies of human interaction. In Achebe's words, fiction "calls into full life our total range of imaginative faculties and gives us a heightened sense of our personal, social and human reality" ("The Truth of Fiction" 151; Idinopulos 51). Fictional texts are not merely descriptive. They are, by their narrative nature, preoccupied with alternative possibilities and divergent futures. Pablo Vila argues that "narrating is much more than describing events and actions. It does more by relating events and actions, organising them into sequences or plots and then attaching them to a character ... [hence] narrative constructs the identity of the character by constructing the story" (79). Vila's argument resonates with Anssi Paasi's notion of a narrative as "an ontological condition of social life [through which] people come to know, understand, make sense of the social world," and constitute social identities ("Boundaries as Social Processes" 75). The narrative could therefore be said to enhance reality. In relation to the study of the border as line and process, literature, unlike conventional historical representation of reality, dramatises tensions in identity construction as characters encounter various spatial and cultural borders as spaces of similarities and differences that provoke questions about belonging.

Border studies, on the other hand, provides useful insights for border poetics analysis of the literary text. My study also draws on ideas on the border propounded by border theorists in the political geography such as David Newman, Anssi Paasi, Noel Parker, James Scott and others to engage the three dimensions of the border mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, namely: that symbolic borders are analogous to traditional territorial lines in their divisive function; that borders are fluid and complex forms of intervention in social life; and that borders are sites of multiple interaction, exchanges and crossings. Newman is a professor and renowned scholar of political geography and geopolitics. He theorises that social constructs can create similar effects as the physical border. According to him,

[t]he ‘here-there’ and ‘us-them’ cut-off points are not always played out through the construction of physical and visible walls and fences. They may be as invisible as they are tangible and, equally, as perceived as they are real. I define you as belonging to a different social, ethnic, economic or religious group and, as such, I have created a border separating the self from the other. (“Borders and Bordering” 177)

His notion of the border as analogous to tangible lines of demarcation underpins the major drive of this thesis, which sets out to establish the border character and effect of social constructs. Newman also advanced the conception of the border as a process which he referred to as “bordering”. He defines bordering as a dynamic process that involves everyday interaction between individuals and groups, which calls for more attention than the traditional notion of the border as fixed lines on the map. He reiterates the evolving nature of borders when he observes that socially constructed and managed borders create “transition spaces and borderlands (frontier zones) which are in a constant state of flux” (Newman, "Borders and Bordering" 173). For Newman, social borders, which Schimanski and Wolfe call the symbolic borders, are invisible to the eyes but impart strongly on the human person and condition their daily activities (Newman, "Borders and Bordering" 172; Schimanski and Wolfe, "Entry Points" 12). These social borders are:

indicative of binary distinction (us/them; here/there; inside/outside) between groups at a variety of scales, from the national down to the personal spaces and territories of the individual. ... [the borders] determine group (in some cases defined territorially) belonging, affiliation and membership, and the way in which the process of inclusion and exclusion are institutionalized. (Newman, "The Lines That Continue to Separate Us" 147, my emphasis)

Newman’s proposition, therefore, is that borders are not only geographical constructs but also social constructs that designate social belonging, as well as influence interpersonal or inter-group relationships. For him, bordering or border-crossing, more than crossing spatial lines, includes a constant need in people to “leav[e] one form of social behaviour behind while taking on another” (“Contemporary Research Agendas” 44). Stephen Wolfe, in his interview, also echoes the idea of the border as a process. He affirms that “the view that borders are processes – *borderings* – rather than fixed lines is clear, and this includes figurative or imaginative borders, which both surround us and are created for us and by us” (Kurki and Laurén 116, emphasis original). Discussing the idea of the border as an indicator of difference, Shameem Black holds that borders are “the distinctions by which otherness is created as a category with

significant social implication ... [which can] be perceived as political, cultural, economic, linguistic, or even biological” (*Fiction Across Borders* 2).

Affirming the idea of bordering as a process, James W. Scott and Henk van Houtum define it as the production and the reproduction of boundaries in response to shifting relations between spaces and identities (271). Bordering is regarded as changing dynamics, as hierarchical (Newman, “Borders and Bordering” 172), as “plastic” (Bernes 2014), and “as a part of shifting space-society relationship” (Kolossoff and Scott 3). Clearly, bordering informs the tensions between physical/social spaces and individual identities in a process of border-making. Debordering and rebordering, which will be used very often in this analysis, are all expressions of bordering. Debordering implies a deemphasising of already existing borders, a decline or rejection of classifications or determinants of social structures and stereotypes, which sometimes enables border-crossing and is also a resultant effect of border-crossing. Debordering implies assuming or residing in the space (physical or aspatial) of the other. Rebordering could be an internal change that either excludes the formerly included or vice versa (Newman, “Borders and Bordering” 177).

This study, therefore, draws on these border conceptions and framings to analyse borders as dynamic phenomena that constitute social identities. It analyses selected novels from the perspective of border theorisation and criticism, which very few academic studies in Nigeria, to date, have employed as the primary lens. The notion of bordering as the process of border-making is central to my analysis of characters’ identity construction and negotiation. I pay attention to the performance of bordering made vivid by narratives where characters engage in continuous negotiation of belonging to territorial and symbolic spaces, either by conforming to or radically resisting these borders into which historical events or societal structures have confined them. With the novels that reflect the historical moments of Nigeria’s social-political spaces, social difference is strongly imagined within and beyond national borders. In this study, the idea of bordering suggests that characters not only cross borders (for example, Nwoye and Fatima in *Things Fall Apart* and *Sunset at Dawn* respectively) or de-emphasise stereotypes (as represented by Ifemelu and Mma in *Americanah* and *Night Dancer* respectively) to assert their individual personality, but sometimes in the process of identity negotiation the characters emerge with a distinct identity that suggests a production of new boundaries (rebordering) or less exclusive boundaries. These novels also present borderlands as spaces of risk and tension marked by the constant struggle for identity assertion and affiliation. Literature, by “making the private visible” in narration, is thus an essential component of the social imaginary, and

border poetics offers a welcome addition to the development of the field of border studies (Schimanski, 'Changing Borders' 6).

An example of border poetic reading in African literature is seen in Chimdi Maduagwu's (2013) attempt to discuss religion, slavery, and colonialism as border issues, through a reading on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*, a novel set in Kenya in the 1920s. Maduagwu connects the physical boundaries in the text – the ridges – with the function of religion in the text as symbolic boundary. These two (the ridges and religion) eventually become firm determiners of the separateness of the Kamenio and Makuyu communities. Maduagwu further likens this separation to the effect of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, colonialism, and partition that resulted in the separation of Africans at home and those in the diaspora, and the fracturing and complete disintegration of Africa within (63). In comparing the major characters of *The River Between* to those of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, Maduagwu foregrounds the need to de-emphasise divisions, as symbolised in the sacrificial characters of Wayaki, Muthoni, and Nyambura. He thereby advocates a debordering hinged on values that unite Africans, and a tolerance of characteristic traditions and beliefs, in order to achieve African unity. Maduagwu's insistence on the need for debordering as a prerequisite for unity speaks directly to the overarching argument of this thesis which emphasises a rethinking of identity and boundary exclusivity.

Schimanski, with focus on Norwegian literature, also extensively engages the poetics of the border. His research describes the border as ambivalent and dynamic in itself. Schimanski asserts that at the point of the spatial movement in a border crossing, "both the border crosser and the border move from one condition to another". He holds that crossing a temporal boundary informs the notion of the fluidity of borders and the ontological changes that happen at the moment of border crossing ("Crossing and Reading" 47). Schimanski's works relate to a current move by border scholars to border decentring, a move that advances the notion of the border from the material to the socio-cultural, where the border is problematised, making it less of "a taken-for-granted entity, but precisely as a site of investigation" (Parker and Vaughan-Williams, "Critical Border Studies" 728). Investigating the dynamics of the border and advancing the idea of the border from the traditional notion of geographical fixity allow for a close focus on individuals who inhabit border zones.

Border and Identity

Border critics believe that identity is closely linked to the formation and creation of borders (Newman, "The Lines" 147; Newman, "Borders and Bordering" 175; Paasi, "A Border Theory" 17; Schimanski, "Reading Borders" 94; Paasi, "Bounded Spaces" 224; Paasi, "Boundaries as Social Processes" 81). According to Paasi, identity remains one of the "watchwords in current interdisciplinary border studies" (Paasi, "A Border Theory: An Unattainable Dream or a Realistic Aim for Scholars?" 17). Schimanski's assertion that borders provide people with cultural spaces for both identity reinforcement and destabilisation, making dividing constructs determinants of identity descriptions, reiterates Margaret Wetherell's observation that there is a significant relationship between the individual and his or her "localised social groups"⁹ ("Crossing and Reading" 49; Wetherell 12). By implication, negotiating identity is intrinsically connected to the demands of the social structures, and informs the idea of conformity or resistance in the act of becoming and identity appropriation. Besides the consideration of the border as the key concept in this study, the idea of identity construction and/or negotiation is a major point of focus.

This study will anchor its analysis of characters' identity negotiations on Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets' assumptions of identity. In their seminal book, *Identity Theory* (2009), they hold that identity relates to role, belonging, and characterisation. They assert that identity is enacted in relation to one's occupation of a particular role in a society, membership of a particular group, or claim to particular characteristics that make one unique. Burke and Stets' assertions are useful in analysing characters' identity negotiations at hegemonic social borders. A character's role within a group, his/her group identity, and/or the individual personality of the character determines how he/she negotiates belonging. The intricacies between the character and these determinants of identity negotiation mark the tension within the texts; tensions that result in compliant or resistant behaviour. Weigert, J. S. Teitge and D. W. Teitge refer to this tension as the "dramatic quality of life flowing in part from the endless negotiations of identities as the self attempts to appropriate identities that others do not bestow, or others attempt to bestow identities that the self does not appropriate" (31). The endlessness of identity negotiation points to the nature of the border as a process, a continuum.

⁹ Such as race, religion, sexuality, social class, gender, nationality, ethnicity and so on (Wetherell 12).

Chapter Overview

Structurally, this thesis is organised into five chapters: the introductory chapter, three textual analysis chapters, and the concluding chapter. Discussions in chapters two, three, and four are divided into sections, with each of the sections (seven in all) focusing on one novel but extending to the other selected novels and other secondary texts of similar concern. The concluding chapter will provide a detailed summary of the findings of the study and open vistas for further research. Additional details of what each of the five chapters sets out to do are discussed below.

This introductory chapter has presented the scope of the study and a survey of the existing literature. It has looked at the critical debate on the periodisation of Nigerian literature and the need for flexibility in the usage of the spatio-temporal classification of literature in Nigeria. The chapter has highlighted the concepts of border and identity which will be the framework of my analysis. The chapter also discussed the rationale for the choice of texts, outlining historical factors underlining the portrayal of texts as border-crossing fictions.

The second chapter discusses colonialism and ethnicism as social constructs that caused tension in expressions of belonging within first-generation Nigerian writing. This historic moment informs the concentration on Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976). The idea of the border as a divide and as a place of identity negotiations is employed to describe the occupants of binary territories and their constant negotiation of belonging around colonially imposed divides and ethnic consciousness. The first section, "*Things Fall Apart* (TFA) and the Notion of Cultural Border", extensively discusses bordering as necessitated by colonial incursion. In this text, for instance, the intersection between cultures – African and Western – becomes the border through which characters present various levels of belonging. In this reading the colonialism is a catalyst for the tension and fluidity of inter-cultural and intra-cultural border tensions. The incursion of the colonialists introduces a process of renegotiation, retention, and rejection of identities.

The second part of the chapter, titled "The Politics and Poetics of Ethnic Bordering in Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn*", examines ethnicity as a border figure. *Sunset at Dawn*, a historical fiction on the Nigerian civil war, engages identity at the ethnic borders. The text's political and satiric orientation questions ethnic barriers, highlighting the historical Nigerian civil war as a factor and an obstacle to national cohesion, and calls for a debordering of ethnic identities. The text presents an engagement with the complexity of the ethnic border, narrating

ethnic affiliation as both linked to and delinked from geographical lines of demarcation. In this chapter, the argument is made that negotiating ethnic belonging transcends natal correspondence.

Things Fall Apart and *Sunset at Dawn* present the multiplicity and complexity of bordered identity at the cultural and ethnic levels, and the struggles of characters to negotiate and construct a ‘self’ along these borders. *Things Fall Apart* and *Sunset at Dawn* function at a dual level of border manifestation: a border with the external Other (Umuofia/the colonialist and Biafra/Nigeria respectively) and the borders within. These borders are occasioned by historical moments (the colonial incursion and the arbitrary amalgamation of ethnic groups) without which the borders would not have existed in the first place. Following the Afropolitan model and the strategies of delinking suggested by critics such as Chielozone Eze (2014) and Walter Mignolo (2007) respectively, the thesis projects a need to transform borders into frontier spaces of positive encounter, interaction, and exchange.

Chapter Three, “The Dynamics of Class Border and Bordering”, is guided by the topical histories that were the concern of the second generation. It examines economic and socio-political borders created by post-colonial disillusionment and social injustice in two novels: Festus Iyayi’s *Violence* (1979) and Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain* (2000). The readings of these two texts are organised around the theorisation of the border as an institution that orders human lives and impacts strongly on the daily processes of identity negotiation (Paasi, “Boundaries as Social Processes” 1998; Newman, “The Lines” 2006; Schimanski, “Reading Borders” 2015). Economic and socio-political categorisation are examined as consciously constructed and monitored by the social and political elites through violent means that manifest in the forms of exploitation, rape, and denial of voice. Thus, along the imaginary landscape created by class inequality is a movement – crossing, forced crossing and hindered crossing – between the classes. The texts in this chapter present the private (the chalets, bedrooms, beaches, prisons, and bodies) as places where power dynamics are born and incubated. These places encompass the struggle both within and between classes where bordering manifests as corporeal crossing and transgressed bodies and spaces (that of Adisa and Iyese in the two texts). In some cases, as will be seen in the analysis, individual stories transcend the borders of these enclosures to perform an epistemological border-crossing with a revolutionary potential that disrupts border fixity.

In particular, the discussion of Festus Iyayi’s *Violence*, titled “Class Border Performativity and Festus Iyayi’s *Violence*”, goes beyond existing criticisms of the text, most of which proceed

from a Marxist perspective. My discussion interrogates the nuances of class bordering and constant tension between the classes that make the borderland a zone of identity negotiation and cross-border struggle. In the text, an interaction exists at two levels: intra-class and interclass. The former exposes the internal dynamics of living within the same economic territory, exemplified in the characterisation of the two main couples in the text. Idemudia and his wife Adisa, a lower-class couple, depict an internal tension as they go through their daily struggles with poverty and the concomitant pressure to acquire wealth. On the other hand, Obofun and Queen, who are a higher-class couple, expose levels of infidelity and corruption as they too struggle to maintain affluence and influence. The subsequent analysis of interclass interactions involves the more intractable and abstract borders that facilitate the elites' exploitation that is either resisted or conceded to.

The idea of violence – rape and silencing – and resistance is further discussed in the second part of the chapter under the title, “Transcending Borders: Voice and Agency in Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain*”. *Arrows of Rain*, by its date of publication, problematises its inclusion as a second-generation novel. However, it is heuristically analysed as a second-generation novel owing to the text’s thematic engagement with socio-political decadence in Nigeria, and its foregrounding of the dictatorial moment of the nation which led to massive transnational migration, and becomes the point of departure for third-generation writing. It further engages the political divide between the individual and society, which is the hallmark of postcolonial disillusionment. My analysis of *Arrows of Rains* as border fiction examines rape and silencing as agents of violent and top-down management of the class border.

The focus of the fourth chapter is on race, gender, and religion as social borders that are comparable to national and ethnic borders. Structurally, this chapter, unlike the previous two chapters, contains three subsections to accommodate the three national concerns identified with third generation Nigerian literary writing: transnational movements, gender stereotypes, and religious extremism. The first, “Reading the Racial Border in Chimamanda Adichie’s *Americanah*”, discusses racialised borders and the impact of transnational border-crossing on identity. To develop this argument, I use the concept of the borderland, which Gloria Anzaldúa defines as a meeting of two or more races within a continuous formation. For me, the borderland, in its fluidity, produces multiple levels of reaction ranging from compliance to resistance. In Ifemelu and Obinze, the two major characters whose respective lives in America and England are affected by racism and who return to their home country, Nigeria, as a final expression of racial resistance, the novel allows a reading of racial border and border-crossing

in three strands: the difficulty of becoming and the process of “getting multiple” due to the emergence of cultures within the self, becoming the “counterstance” by way of resistance, and finally standing on both shores in new consciousness (Anzaldúa 100). However, while Anzaldúa celebrates a new, fluid, emergent border identity, Adichie foregrounds the way the racial borderland can strengthen the consciousness of one’s original national identity.

The second part of Chapter Four is titled “Gendered Territories and Border Inclusivity in Unigwe’s *Night Dancer*”. Here, stereotypes of gender in diverse identity negotiations are explored. This perspective considers a cultural emancipation of the woman held in the prison of patriarchal hegemony. By imbuing her female characters, Mma and Ezi, with the triumphant power over societal culture, Unigwe, as a contemporary feminist novelist, emphasises the need for gender border-crossing that realises cultural equality for all. Bracha Ettinger’s idea of “fragilisation” comes in handy in the examination of the period before self-assertion. Fragilisation, according to Ettinger, is self-relinquishment that allows the self to accept the subject position in relation to the other. Chika Unigwe exposes this period of fragilisation in the weaknesses of her female characters in deference to their male partners, before their decision to challenge the culture that casts them into the mould of subservience.

The first two novels discussed in this chapter, Adichie’s *Americanah* and Unigwe’s *Night Dancer*, represent third-generation Nigerian novelists’ concerns. These novels reimagine and question the stereotypical conceptions of race and gender. As third generation novels,

[they are part of] an order of knowledge in which questions of subjecthood and agency are not only massively overdetermined by the politics of identity in a multicultural and transnational frame but in which the tropes of otherness and subalternity are being remapped by questioning erstwhile totalities such as history, nation, gender, and their representative symbologies. (Adesanmi and Dunton, “Nigeria’s Third Generation Writing” 15)

The two novels discuss the act of border-crossing for self-definition, which entails standing against the status quo. This is what Gloria Anzaldúa describes as “leav[ing] home, in order to find one’s intrinsic nature buried under the personality that has been imposed on one” (Anzaldúa 38). In the third part of Chapter Four, titled: “Elnathan John’s *Born on a Tuesday* and the Poetics of Religious Border and Extremism”, the narrative representation of religious divides is discussed. Beyond the current destabilising religious concern in the present Nigerian history (the Boko Haram insurgency), the text interrogates religious belief and bordering

caused by fanaticism. In this section, unlike in *Americanah* and *Night Dancer*, the limits of self-actualisation are considered. The protagonist's struggle for self-actualization is hindered by circumstances that increases his vulnerability such as lack of education and age. This section beyond assertion of identity also lays emphasis on the destructive effect of adverse bordering.

The concluding chapter engages the thread that connects the different chapters of this thesis. It brings together the conclusions that the different chapters arrive at concerning identity negotiation at the socio-spatial border zones. The concluding chapter summarises my reading of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976); Festus Iyayi's *Violence* (1979) and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000); Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer* (2012) and Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* (2016) as border and border-crossing narratives exposing an encounter with the border as a necessary point of self-definition. It also summarizes my argument for an inclusive territorial and symbolic difference that ensures human flourishing. The concluding chapter also evaluates the extent to which interdisciplinary border crossing may be useful in enhancing research in today's academic world. In this way, this thesis hopes to contribute to the scholarly discourse on the borders, from the perspective of literature in general and Nigerian literature in particular.

Conclusion

The reconsideration of borders and the extension of border studies from the discipline of geography to the humanities allows for a cultural and literary turn in the study of the border. It allows a reimagining of the border that focuses not only on the tangible – the physical position of nation-state boundaries – but also on the intricacies of living at the border and living as the border. A humanities-based approach to the border draws the realities of the border close to the people who participate in territorial and social distinctions, either as perpetrators or recipients; the “us” and the “them”. This approach further fulfils one of the contemporary tasks of critical border studies, which, according to Noel Parker and Nick Vaughan-Williams, must deal with “how borders function in different settings, with what consequences, and for whose benefit, [and this involves] a shift from the *concept of the border* to the *notion of bordering practices*; and the adoption of the lens of *performance* through which bordering practices are produced and reproduced” (“Critical Border Studies” 729 emphasis in the original). Engaging the assumptions of borders and identity in literary representation of the selected novels enriches the scope of critical border studies.

CHAPTER TWO

Border Complexity and Identity Negotiation

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the processes and complexity of cultural and ethnic borders and bordering as represented in two novels of the first literary generation: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* (1976). It examines the tensions that characterise the in-between spaces of these borders, tensions that affect communal and individual identity and belonging, and tensions that exist as identities are negotiated both in resistance to, and in compliance with, traditional and ethnic barriers. The creative writers of this generation engaged the encounter with colonial culture whose oppressive administration and religion stripped the nation of its geographical and cultural identity. As Taye Aworemi-Arayela observed, Nigerian literature of the first generation reflects in a particular way "the struggle of a people whose country is still undergoing a painful transformation from colonisation, through [ruptured] independence to internal wars, coups, counter-coups, political [and ethnic] strife" (30).

As I sought to explain in the introductory chapter, the time of publication and the thematic concern form the parameters that guide the categorisation of texts in this thesis. Works categorised as first-generation writings not only initiate a literary era in Nigeria; they provide a body of writing whose thematic concern is based on the realities that attended the Nigerian nation through the colonial era to its early days as an independent nation. Even though the classification of literary writing in Nigeria, as argued in Chapter One, should not be considered as rigid due to the fluidity of themes and many forms of historical continuities, the idea of a generational divide creates a useful, and not entirely arbitrary, sense of periodisation that allows for literary concerns to be compared and analysed (Adesanmi and Dunton, "Nigeria's Third Generation Writing" 13). Hence, although themes discussed in the first generation may possibly be engaged in another generation (such as the narration of the civil war in Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* published within the third generation), these themes bear the stamp of the generation wherein they are primarily categorised. Furthermore, since this chapter refers to a period in Nigeria's history marked by colonialism and inter-ethnic strife and civil war, it is necessary to briefly revisit this historical period to contextualise the analysis aimed at historicising physical and symbolic borders.

From the moment Britain was officially assigned the territories originally known as the Colonies on the Niger in the wake of the 1885 scramble for Africa, the physical boundaries of the country that would later become known as Nigeria experienced successions of debordering and rebordering. Before 1906, the three British territories on the Niger¹⁰ – Southern Protectorate (mostly populated by the Igbo ethnic group), Lagos colony (mostly populated by the Yoruba ethnic group), and Northern Protectorate (mostly populated by the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group) – that make up the present-day Nigeria, existed as independent territories, each administered by a British representative called a High Commissioner. The policies that regulated inter-territorial transactions such as the importation of goods between the protectorates, and those implemented by the Land Proclamation decree of 1900, which conditioned the acquisition of land by any non-indigene in the Northern Protectorate on the consent of the High Commissioner, attest to the independence of these territories (Geary 238/9). The policies and decrees also sustained the powerful alienation of the regions from each other, “except for uneasy party alliances at the Federal Assembly in Lagos which provided a veneer of unity but could not conceal the deepening external and internal divisions” (Ikiddeh 162). On 26 February 1906, the first act of debordering, the merging of Lagos Protectorate and Southern Protectorate, was carried out by the Governor of the two protectorates, Sir Walter Egerton (Geary 123). Consequently, between 1906 and 1914, Nigeria operated two independent territories: the Northern and the Southern Protectorates.

Ultimately, on January 1, 1914¹¹, a total debordering of the internal physical boundaries that separated the Northern Protectorate and Southern Protectorate was achieved, and Nigeria was

¹⁰ (i) The Oil Rivers Protectorate – proclaimed by the British in 1885, given a 'government' in 1891, and renamed the Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893 – was until 1906 ruled by Consuls with headquarters in Calabar and responsible to the Foreign Office in London.

(ii) The Colony of Lagos, ceded to the British Crown in 1861, was ruled by Governors responsible to the Colonial Office in London and resident in Sierra Leone from 1866 to 1874, and then in the Gold Coast up to 1886 when Lagos Colony had a Governor of its own.

(iii) The Niger Territories of the Royal Niger Company (corresponding to what later became Northern Nigeria) were ruled from 1886 to 1899 by the agents of a private company, the Royal Niger Company, who were accountable to a private Board of Directors in London (Akpan 2).

¹¹ The 1914 amalgamation was for administrative and trade convenience, as Britain recorded “astonishing progress and prosperity” (Geary 50, 124) and a massive rise in revenue eight years after the amalgamation. There was no consideration for the geographic and ethnic composition of the territories and the inhabitants, evident in the colonialist’s claim that: “the progress achieved was not by any way of conquest, the land and the people were ours for the taking, and the Secretary of State gave orders” (Geary 1). What is absent is any consideration of the indigenous people affected by the colonial management of Nigeria, which continued until Independence in 1960 and beyond. During this period, the geographical definition of the internal borders of the three major ethnic groups that make up Nigeria had remained unstable owing to the problem of forcing territories with unique territorial and cultural characteristics to amalgamate.

officially amalgamated into a single country under British colonial rule, with Sir Frederick Lugard acting as the first Governor General. In 1939, Nigeria reverted to the three ethno-regional divisions (then named the Provinces of the North (Hausa), the West (Yoruba) and the East (Igbo)), in consideration of the three major ethnic groups. In 1954, after a constitutional conference held in the capital city, Lagos, the federal territory of Lagos, and the Southern Cameroons were created, thereby dividing Nigeria into five parts with federal status (Burns 16; Ekundare 13). In addition to the five parts, the Mid-Western Region was created on August 9, 1963 (Burns 17).

From every indication, borders were rapidly drawn and redrawn in the colonial period in ways that served British imperial interests and, in fact, in ways that destabilised the existing demarcations rather than reflecting established regional identities. Consequently, boundaries created by geographical and cultural insensitivity and irrational border markings carried out by the colonialists constituted the major cause of tension in Nigeria, which invariably impacted other facets of life in the country: culture, gender, religion, and ethnic politics.

Many critics of the amalgamation have asserted that Nigeria is founded on arbitrary bordering which has continued to threaten the unity of the nation over the century of its existence. Sir Ahmadu Bello, the then Sardauna of Sokoto and one of the very prominent leaders of the Northern Political Congress (NPC), described the amalgamation as “the mistake of 1914” (qtd in Pereira and Ibrahim 923). The amalgamation brought about by the “colonial fiat”, in Obi Nwakanma’s term, is aptly described by Ntieyong U. Akpan as “fragile and superficial” due to the continuous secession threats that began with the Northerners during the 1951 Macpherson Constitution (Akpan 19; Nwakanma 2). For Wale Adebaniwa and Ebenezer Obadare, in addition to many other critics of the Nigeria amalgamation, the consolidation of territories is evidence of “colonial violence and metropolitan arbitrariness” (388). The arbitrariness of the national boundaries and heterogeneity of the citizens, traditions, cultures, and languages of the three major ethnic groups (as well as over 300 minor ethnic groups), has remained a flashpoint of internal divergence in terms of inter-ethnic relationships in Nigeria.

Nigeria’s illogical amalgamation and unstable bordering reflect in the continuous inter-ethnic struggles which will be discussed using Chukwuemeka Ike’s *Sunset at Dawn*. Achebe acknowledged that “the structure of the country was such that there was an in-built power struggle among the ethnic groups” (*There was a Country* 51). Thus, while the amalgamation achieved a debordering of the three territories to form one nation, it consequently provoked new forms of ethnic consciousness and strife. With regard to ethnic politics in Nigeria,

Lugard's administrative formula had an adverse effect: it enhanced the spirit of ethnicism in the new nation. Lugard's imposition of the administrative and judicial system of the North (which was formerly under his administration) on the South after amalgamation, had a long-term effect on the political development of the nation (Crowder 29) and gave rise to enmity between the regions. The imposition and imbalance in the amalgamation is reflected in the colonial consideration of Northern Nigeria as the 'husband' in the union which Lord Lewis Harcourt, the then Colonial Secretary, metaphorically refers to as 'marriage' between the protectorates:

We have released Northern Nigeria from the leading strings of the (British) Treasury. The promising and well-conducted youth is on an allowance 'on his own' and is about to effect an alliance with a Southern lady of means. I have issued the special licence and Sir Frederick will perform the ceremony May the Union be fruitful and the couple constant. (Akpan 6)

This discriminatory characterisation of Northern Nigeria as the 'husband' and Southern Nigeria as the 'wife' in the above analogy exposes the colonialist's mind-set. Despite the fact that the North depended on the financial revenue from the South, the discrimination makes it obvious that the fusion of the two territories was not contracted on the basis of equality. By implication, the amalgamation is the conquest and subjugation of Southern Nigeria by Northern Nigeria (Ojo 71), since the latter found more favour with Lord Lugard. This is evidenced also in the fact that Lugard's primary intention for merging the two regions, besides financial expediency and settlement of the railway problem within the two protectorates, was to bring the 'backward' Northern Nigeria up to the same level of development as the South (Geary 213 & 250; Crowder 26). Over the years, this unequal foundation has contributed to political and economic imbalance in Nigeria and the constant struggle by the Southerners to oppose marginalisation and political suppression by the North.

Towards 1960, the desire to gain independence from Britain inspired a spirit of nationalism among Nigerians (Awoyemi-Arayela 30). In relation to the developing sense of Nigerian nationalism, the geopolitical border between Nigeria and the colonial master intensified, and the latter emerged as a potent figure of the Other that served to give definition, meaning, and stability to a new, politically exigent sense of unity. However, the intensification of Nigerian/colonialist difference did not in any way diminish ethnic difference in Nigeria. In fact, socio-ethnic lines manifested in the three political parties that ran for the first national election in 1959. These parties – the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) representing the north, the

Action Group (AG) representing the west, and the National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) representing the east – evidenced a clear ethnicisation of politics and mistrust that, along with other factors, later contributed to the bloody civil war of 1967-1970. Critics like Alexander Madiebo (1980), Chidi Amuta (1983), and Olaniyan and Asuelime (2014) believe that the fight for independence had an introverted effect in that, instead of fostering unification, the nation drifted further and further apart along ethnic borders, with the Northern party strongly supported by Britain even after the exit of the latter.

The effect of Britain's pseudo-exit at independence reflected in the institution of neo-colonialism. Thus, to indirectly remain in control of Nigeria and its economy, Britain masterminded the first election that instituted a Northerner, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, as the first Prime Minister of Nigeria, alongside an Easterner, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, as the ceremonial president of Nigeria (*There was a Country* 50, 52). This manipulation, in Achebe's words, compromised Nigerian democracy from the beginning (*There was a Country* 51). The excesses of the politicians immediately after 1960 independence further impacted negatively on the young nation and its determination to survive. Internal rancour and mistrust among ethnic groups and among civilians continued until the military coup of 1966, misconstrued as an Igbo (Eastern) coup, owing to the fact that the eight coup plotters, with the exception of Maj. Adewale Ademoyega, were Igbos and most of the politicians killed during the coup, including the Prime Minister, were Northerners. This led to heightened tension between the Northern region and the Eastern region that finally culminated in the counter-coup of 29 July 1966, which brought back a Northerner, General Yakubu Gowon, as the military Head of State, as well as triggering an anti-Eastern genocide, the "Pogrom" – "a lust for vengeance" in Achebe's words – that saw the massacre of more than 50,000 Igbos living in the Northern part of Nigeria between May and October 1966 (Ekundare 12; *There was a Country* 66).

Northern/Eastern political tension and clashes led to further re-bordering in Nigeria. On the 27th of May 1966, contrary to the agreement reached between the Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon and the aggrieved Premier of the Eastern Region, Major General Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu, which required the enactment of a degree of autonomy to the Eastern Region, Gowon divided Nigeria into twelve states. Three days later, General Ojukwu reacted by declaring the secession of the Eastern region from the Nigerian nation. He named the Eastern region the Republic of Biafra. This breakup of the Nigerian nation 52 years after its existence as an amalgamated whole was intolerable to the Nigerian government. Supported by Britain and Russia (*There was a Country* 99-104), Nigeria – the Hausa and the

Yoruba – engaged Biafra in a deadly civil war that lasted from May 1967 to January 14, 1970, when Biafra surrendered and reintegrated into Nigeria.

In the chaos of Nigerian amalgamation, independence, and the civil war, the first-generation Nigerian writers were faced with the urgent task of finding narrative forms to accommodate the kinds of knowledge engendered by this disruptive historical period. According to Achebe, the Nigerian creative writers responded “in a variety of ways [they] found themselves with a new, terrifying problem on their hands: They found that the independence their country was supposed to have won was totally without content” (*There was a Country* 52). Typical of what Taye Awoyemi-Arayela calls a symbiotic relationship with society, the first-generation writers give back in writing what they receive from society (28), resonating Hayden White’s claim that the cardinal value of narrative is to “translate knowing into telling” (5). The works of authors such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Flora Nwapa, Marbel Segun, Adaora Lily Ulasi, Elechi Amadi, Chukwuemeka Ike, Ola Rotimi, Bekederemo-Clark, Christopher Okigbo, Buchi Emecheta, and Cyprian Ekwensi reflect the tensions in this historical period characterised by constantly shifting physical and symbolic borders. As “the trail-blazers” (Awoyemi-Arayela 32), their writings not only initiated formal literary writing in Nigeria, but also questioned the subjugation of the Nigerian mind by colonial rule, condemned neo-colonialism, and advocated for ethnic inclusivity.

In this Chapter, therefore, focus is placed on the literary representation of the colonial encounter and the civil war as two major events in the first phase of Nigerian existence, along which border identities and belonging were contested and negotiated. Specifically, Chinua Achebe’s seminal novel *Things Fall Apart*¹² (*TFA*) and Chukwuemeka Ike’s *Sunset at Dawn*¹³ (*SD*) are examined as responses to these historical markers. My choice of these texts is informed by the importance of *Things Fall Apart* as the first literary response to the colonial incursion, and *Sunset at Dawn* as a text that does not just recount the war in fictive mode, but ridicules the essence of the war and ethnic division: in other words, its political orientation

¹² For this study and citations therein, I use the 2008 publication of *Things Fall Apart* by Pearson Education Limited, London, with the Introduction by Mpalive Msiska.

There have been other publications of *Things Fall Apart* since its first publication by William Heinemann in 1958. These publications have responded to the high demand of *Things Fall Apart* and have either changed the cover picture, colour, or added an introduction, all in the service of the reading community. Such publications include Anchor Books 1959, Heinemann African Writers series 1962, Penguin Books 2001 (Introduced by Biyi Bandele), Norton W. W. & Company Inc. 2009 (introduced by Francis Abiola Irele), Doubleday Canada 2009.

¹³ For this study and citations, I use the 2014 publication of *Sunset at Dawn* by University Press, Ibadan. It was first published in 1976 by William Collins Sons and Co Ltd, first issued by Fontana Books in 1976, first issued in University Press PLC in 1993, and reprinted in 2001 before this present publication.

relates to its distinctive satirical form. Secondly, bringing these quite diverse texts into conversation (a first of its kind), foregrounds the relatedness of the histories they respond to.

Things Fall Apart and *Sunset at Dawn* share some similarities regarding the fluidity of characters' identity in and across the different sides of belonging. Okonkwo, as will be discussed later, typifies fluid identity in relation to his community at the beginning and in the later part of the narrative. At the beginning of the text, he is among the revered, but in the later part of the narrative he becomes othered. *Things Fall Apart* and *Sunset at Dawn* also enjoin a reading of different levels of bordering, and with significant representation of intra-borders. In *Things Fall Apart*, within the discourse of colonial oppression, the Umuofian community is the 'other', and yet within this 'other' exists other levels of othering. Similarly, *Sunset at Dawn* deals with the process of othering of Biafra in the larger space of the nation, as well as intra-Biafran othering.

The analysis of *Things Fall Apart* and *Sunset at Dawn*, therefore, looks at the nuances of physical, cultural, ethnic, and ideological territories. It examines the place of characters and communities in the struggle to maintain or resist imposed identity categories. The idea of the border in these novels corresponds to Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe's contention that theorisations of the border expose its "zones of instability in which ethical, political, cultural and national questions are negotiated" ("Entry Points" 9). By bringing these novels together within the discussion of the representational crisis in Nigerian history, I argue that colonial incursions and ethnic structures create borderlines between characters and groups, partitioning them into conflicting and contested territories where they are compelled to negotiate their identities along these socio-cultural and ethnic divides. However, I contend that the negotiation of cultural and ethnic identity is not directly related to natal belonging. In this case, the novels call for inter-cultural and inter-ethnic debordering and a 'balanced marriage' of the groups for communal and national cohesion.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and the Notion of Cultural Border

Chinua Achebe was born in 1930 in the eastern part of Nigeria during the peak of the incursion of the British missionaries. He therefore referred to himself as having been born "at a cultural crossroads" (Achebe, *There was a Country* 8). He witnessed the problematic encounter of the two cultures – Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR) – and the resultant divide it created between the converts to the new religion and the adherents of traditional religion. Affirming the bordering effect of the Western and African cultural encounter with himself as

a convert, Achebe attests that “there were occasions when one would suddenly realize there were sides, and one was on one or another” (*There was a Country* 10). At the level of the community, especially in the eastern part of Nigeria, the imposition of the colonial administration and religion continues to divide communities and cause intra-communal differences. The new faith brought about scepticism in the adherents of the African Traditional Religion and subsequently became an agent of religious division. Hence, beyond contested ethno-regional boundaries, communities and families experienced rifts with the coming of the colonialist.

Achebe attended Government College in Umuahia, Eastern Nigeria; a school particularly established by the colonial administrators to educate Nigeria’s potential future elites. Achebe admitted that it was at Government College Umuahia that he encountered some British literature, especially Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Joyce Cary’s *Mister Johnson*, which later, in his *Home and Exile*, he described as a representation of “a very strong aversion to the people [they are] presenting” and an “exercise of absolute power over narrative” (24-25). His tertiary education was at the then University College Ibadan situated in Western Nigeria, which at the time was the only University College in Nigeria and an affiliate of the University of London. Achebe’s view of Conrad and Cary’s novels as a distortion of African identity eventually motivated the writing of his masterpiece *Things Fall Apart* in 1958. He describes his work as a “writing back” to the West that attempts a “reshap[ing] of the dialogue between the colonized and the colonizer”, an engagement in the “politics of representation” (Achebe, *There was a Country* 55).

This section of the chapter reappraises Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (TFA) as a border fiction by examining the fluidity and complexity of different borders in the novel. Within the broad cultural tension, *Things Fall Apart* highlights the motif of bordering as a literary reflection of social difference set in motion by the invasion of colonial administrators. The text relates the African/Western cultural clash as the springboard of tensions of identity negotiation in the form of resistance or compliance to the border. Shameem Black explains “social difference” as “the distinctions by which otherness is created as a category with significant social implications” (2). For Black, any experience that creates a sense of otherness can be categorised as social difference. In the novel, social difference includes distinctions such as strong/weak, men/women/children, freeborn/outcast, heathens/converts, living/dead/unborn, and temporal/eternal, and within these binaries hegemonic power operates.

Acknowledging *Things Fall Apart* as African literature's pacesetter and unique among other novels of its time, even among those engaging similar concerns, has remained one of the acts of homage paid by critics of the text. Acknowledgement by renowned African critics such as Florence Stratton (1994), Irele (2000), Gikandi (2001), Okunoye (2010), and Alam (2014), emphasises the place of *Things Fall Apart* among "other equally powerful forces in Pan-African library" (Gikandi 7). Simon Gikandi argues that, unlike the writings of early Pan-Africanists, *Things Fall Apart* dignified African culture through its representation and transformative character, and its ability to shift from the discourse of preceding Pan-Africanist writers on romanticising Europeanised Africa, to the affirmation of African culture amidst colonial anxieties (7).

More than six decades after its publication, *Things Fall Apart* has garnered different forms of critical analysis and has "continued to excite readers of various orientations, [who add] new argument and perspectives to existing ways of reading it [*TFA*]" (Okunoye 45). Theoretical orientations used in the criticisms of *Things Fall Apart*, such as post-colonialism, feminism, and Marxism, tend to describe hegemonic representations. They focus on the power dynamics that define coloniser/colonised, male/female, and strong/weak binaries. This present study builds on the provisions of these theoretical orientations. But more than these analytical tools, border poetics provides an alternative (an umbrella) interpretative lens to engage the different forms of borders (spatial and aspatial), the different planes of their manifestations, the relationship between these borders (on individual and community identitarian scales), and the movements across them.

Critical analysis on *Things Fall Apart* using the theoretical framework of Feminism and gender studies, for instance, foregrounds to the othering of women as one of the critical highpoints of the text. Review of some of these studies presents critics' argument on Achebe's representation of the female subject which they consider as either undermined, appraised, or ambivalent. Florence Stratton and Susan Z. Andrade see the novel's foregrounding of "gender ideology" and "categories of the masculine" respectively (Stratton, 1994: 164-70; Andrade, 1996: 255-256). Stratton categorically states that *Things Fall Apart* legitimises the exclusion of women in political and public affairs (27). However, the likes of Carole Boyce Davies (1986) and Francis Abiola Irele (2000) in their critical analyses hold a contrary view. While affirming Davis' view that the text places the quality of unifying agents on women, Irele asserts that, contrary to the reading of women as the marginalised other, *Things Fall Apart* undermines Okonkwo's masculinity by reaffirming female principles signified mostly in the episodes of

Chielo and the provision of refuge by Okonkwo's mother's village during his exile (12). To support his claim, Irele further argues that Okonkwo's destruction takes place because Okonkwo turned his face against the values, which are represented in his female characters: "the nurturing instinct as opposed to the destructive, the tender as opposed to the violent, the aesthetic as opposed to the practical, in a word, the diurnal as opposed to the nocturnal" (13).

Other critics see the issue of gender in *Things Fall Apart* as straddling possible marginalisation of women and positive representation. Foregrounding Okonkwo's mother as a reaction to Achebe's "under-textualization" in this regard, Biodun Jeyifo argues for ambiguity in the text's gender representation. For him, while *Things Fall Apart*,

has one of the most extensive and dense novelistic inscriptions of the genderization of subjectivities, significations and social space in postcolonial African fiction; the novel's overcoded inscription of the process of en-gendering is massively fractured and ambiguous and cannot be read as a simple, unambiguous inscription of phallocratic dominance. (Jeyifo 851)

Supporting his stand, Jeyifo maintains that while 'femaleness as weakness' and 'maleness as strength' seem to be maintained by some social categorisations, they are not biological. The ambiguous construction of maleness and femaleness is seen, he argues, in the biological sameness and sociological contradiction between Okonkwo and his son Nwoye (854). Though the two are biologically male figure, they have different sociological leanings. Furthermore, the Earth goddess (Ani) and Chielo the priestess of the Oracle of Hills and Caves suppose female strength and superiority (851). This attribution of femaleness to the "most important deity in the religion and sacred lore of the community" seems to be invalidating female weakness. However, my reservation (though outside the purview of this research) is that female exaltation in the text is achievable only when they have been subjected to narrative transnaturalisation; when they transcend the human nature and occupy the office of the goddess. Female exaltation seems to be achieved when the female subject border-crosses from the temporal to the supernatural.

The multiple voices in gender criticism of *Things Fall Apart* present the text as straddling analytic borderlands. Christopher Anyokwu presents the ambiguity in the discursive construction of gender by describing gender in *Things Fall Apart* as a "multi-perspectival construct undergoing relentless critiquing and enquiry" and, as such, the lives of some characters subject them to be interpreted as both male and female. For him, characters like

Okonkwo can be “sufficiently feminised by giving vent to the unconscious articulations of feminine desire and traces in him” (30). He further faults the reading of *Things Fall Apart* as marginalising the feminine gender, since the success of the community which is presented as masculine is tied to the female goddess Ani.

Though readings of *Things Fall Apart* based on gender and other forms of representation of hegemony exist, the rubric that speaks most to the historicity of the novel, which is of central concern to this study, is the encounter with British imperialism and the processes of border-crossings which this cultural encounter initiates in the narrative. Unlike other studies, I reimagine *Things Fall Apart* as a borderscape, which according to Johan Schimanski is a network that “allows us to understand better the entanglement of many different and flexible spaces, discourses and actors in bordering processes” (“Reading from the Border” 68). Considering *Things Fall Apart* as a borderscape permits a perception of the text as a universe of movements between social differences and a critical analysis of the relatedness of these movements. By examining the dynamics and complexity of the bordering and othering within pre- and post-colonial Umuofia community, which will be engaged henceforth, I argue for cultural inclusivity.

Things Fall Apart challenges Western culture by an extensive presentation of pristine order in the everyday life of the Umuofia community. It situates the African traditional system in its right place: a place where its veracity is not established by any other standard, but by itself being itself in its primeval nature. Communal standards exist in the interaction between members of the community in their order of being and achievements. Those who by their effort and destiny have been placed above others are revered and honoured. The weak and the women take their place in their own category. On another level of order, Umuofians know their place in relation to their customs and their gods and the representatives of the gods. In this way, both the strong and the weak are subject to the decree of the community. Characters like Okonkwo receive due punishments when they err. Additionally, the women whose twins are thrown into the evil forest resign their fate to the will of their gods and the custom of the land. The outcasts (also called the *osu*) who are physically, socially, and religiously separated from the rest of the community accept their social exclusion while retaining their identities as Umuofians. However, the advent of the white man upsets this seeming cultural order and tolerance in Part Two, giving rise to ensuing renegotiations of already established identities. According to Mpalive Msiska, who wrote the introduction to *Things Fall Apart*’s 2008 reprint, the colonial moment remains an indelible part of self and communal negotiation (iii), the confrontation of

which marks multiple layers of individual and communal bordering and struggles to retain or cross borders.

The cultural confrontation in *Things Fall Apart* is foreshadowed by the opening narration which flashes back to Okonkwo's gallantry: the fierce wrestling between Okonkwo and Amalinze the Cat. This scene technically draws the reader into the motif of divides which run throughout the text at varying degrees. Okonkwo's defeat of his renowned opponent sets him above his people, giving him a metaphysical stance by equating him to the founder of the village who, at the inception of the village, engaged in a fierce battle with a spirit of the wild for seven days (*TFA* 3). Connecting the achievement of Okonkwo to the founding of the clan reinforces Okonkwo's position within the village, not only as the anchor in their generation, but as the one whose life is meant to strengthen the village and keep community members bonded as one. This idea of Okonkwo being the founder-incarnate is a force that conditions his behaviours throughout the text, even in outright opposition to the intruding Western traditions. This initial representation of Okonkwo prefigures his function as a border figure. I will expand on this in the later part of my analysis.

Okonkwo's life evokes a sense of intrapersonal struggle. He vacillates between hot-temperedness and soft-heartedness. For instance, he loves Ikemefuna, the lad destined to be sacrificed, but Okonkwo prevents himself from expressing it. He also has a special fondness for his daughter, Ezinma, which he shows only on rare occasions. Yet, the sentiments he denies sometimes take hold of him beyond his control. For instance, at the village wrestling Okonkwo reflexively jumps up in jubilation (as he watches the swiftness of his friend Obierika's son as the lad wrestles), but he quickly sits down to hide his joy from the public (*TFA* 38). Between these emotional extremes, Okonkwo straddles an emotional border in his own life, and he is compelled by events to decide on which side of the border to belong. Okonkwo therefore personifies a troubled borderland between two opposing emotions, and the struggle to assert his stand makes him stifle his softer emotions and identify more readily with braveness. He lives with a constant struggle to draw a clear line between affection and law, between the individual and the community, between weakness and strength, and ultimately between life and death.

For Okonkwo, affection for Ikemefuna must not becloud obedience to communal identity. Thus, killing Ikemefuna is a decisive act that expresses his belonging. Ikemefuna's head is a sign-post; an indicator of Okonkwo's emotional border-crossing. Okonkwo withdraws to the rear of the nine kinsmen who march behind Ikemefuna to his sacrifice. His withdrawal

symbolises the borderland moment, a moment of decision: to cross, or not to cross. Okonkwo engages again in a battle with his fear of being thought weak and, as the narrator observes, Okonkwo, dazed with fear, “drew his matchet and cut him [Ikemefuna] down” (49). Ikemefuna’s killing is microcosmic of Okonkwo’s expanded function as a border figure between his community and the white man, which he manifests in the later part of the novel – cutting the head off the white man’s messenger. Thematically, as David Heogberg holds, the story of Ikemefuna is “parallel to the later parts of the novel involving the alien presence of Christians and British officers” (73). For Okonkwo, the community comes before feeling, and in having taken the side of no emotion (exemplified in the killing of Ikemefuna) Okonkwo did not hesitate to decapitate the messenger in defence of his community.

Okonkwo’s son Nwoye presents another instance of bordering and border-crossing. He straddles the borderland by his existence at one point between the African tradition and the message of liberation brought by the white man. He is presented as both an insider, a *bona fide* son of the Umuofia tradition, and an outsider, as regards accepting these traditions. He lingers at what I liken to Homi Bhabha’s “split-space of enunciation ... the inter – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between space* – that carries the burden of a culture” (38, emphasis in the original). Okonkwo’s existence at the borderland is dissimilar to Nwoye’s. While Okonkwo’s ‘inter’ moment is enveloped in a force (fear of being thought weak) that propels his preference for traditional culture, a culture that confirms individual strength as against the Western culture that threatens it, Nwoye’s tarrying at the borderland, the in-between space, exposes a questioning of the traditional culture. Nwoye’s traumatic experience of Umuofia tradition, especially the killing of twins and the sacrifice of Ikemefuna, brings his identity and belonging to Umuofia and its structures into contestation. Nwoye’s momentary stay at the border allows a typical “third space” experience which, according to Bhabha, calls forth a challenge of the “primordial unity or fixity” of the meaning and symbols of culture (37)¹⁴. Hence, while the killing of Ikemefuna confirms Okonkwo’s position on the traditional side of the border, it settles Nwoye’s decision against Umuofian tradition, and finally pushes him across the traditional border. Nwoye’s act of border crossing is captured in the following sentence: “As soon as his father walked in, that night, Nwoye knew that Ikemefuna had been

¹⁴ By reference to Bhabha’s “primordial unity and fixity,” I relate to his central argument that there is no distinctness about culture. By this usage, I do not make a particular reference to Umuofian tradition but to the notion of cultural purity and exclusivity which can be contextually applied to both African and Western culture in the text.

killed, and something seemed to give way inside him like the snapping of a tightened bow” (TFA 49).

The metaphor of a snapped bow suggests a breakage; a release and an end to a struggle for a space of belonging. This snapping signals a movement away from his “unresolved place” (Msiska iii) to self-assertion. The death of Ikemefuna is an example of what Peter Burke terms “disturbance” in his identity change model. According to Burke, “disturbances in the situation [are] events that are beyond the control of individuals which change the self-relevant meanings in the situation” (“Identity Change” 94). Disturbances “introduce a change in the environment [such as Nwoye’s life] that persists and is not countered easily” (“Identity Change” 84). Ikemefuna’s death causes an internal rupture whose outward manifestation is realised with the coming of the Western religion. With the new religion Nwoye finally decides to define where he belongs – just like his father, who, by killing Ikemefuna, finally stands against fear and the pull of sentiment. Nwoye reborders, breaks off, and disowns his father to embrace the new religion. He confesses: “I don’t know. He [Okonkwo] is not my father” (115). To clearly indicate his resolution, he crosses back from Mbanta, their place of exile, with his new identity as a convert and with the new name of Isaac, to Umuofia, where his father is famously acknowledged as a traditional figure despite the homicide he committed. His new name suggests a level of identity change that correlates with the physical border-crossing. Nwoye, therefore, goes back into Umuofia before his father to confirm a change in the order of belonging and identity. He is a typical subversion of cultural fixity that requires unquestioned allegiance to the custom in itself and to its representation in the father-figure.

The text further exposes tense interaction and subversion of primordial fixity, initiated by the colonial incursion, in the relationship between the temporal and eternal; the border between the physical and the supernatural; the world of the living and the world of the gods, the dead, and the unborn. The narrative universe of *Things Fall Apart* exposes a symbiotic interaction between the living and the gods/goddesses (the evil spirits, the ancestors, the gods and goddesses) anchored in constant obedience by the former as the condition for the sustenance of communal identity and order. In other words, the living are said to be peaceful, fruitful, and victorious, as long as they revere and consult the spirits, such as the Oracle of the Hills and Caves or the Earth Goddess, Ani, who is said to be “the ultimate judge of morality and conduct” (29). When Okonkwo violates the Week of Peace by beating his wife, Ezeani, the priest of the Oracles of the Hills and Caves, tells him:

You know as well as I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbour. We live in peace with our fellows to honour our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow. (24)

The generative life of the Umuofia community given by the gods/goddesses is dependent on the living. Ezeani reiterates that Okonkwo's act of beating his wife can ruin the whole clan if the Earth goddess refuses to give her yield because she has been violated (24). In another instance, the festival of the New Yam, the offering of the new yams to "earth goddess and the ancestral spirits of the clan" must compulsorily precede the eating of the new yam (29). Violations of these orders or any alteration (such as in Ezeulu's case in Achebe's *Arrow of God*) attract punitive sanction for the individuals and the community. Despite these specifications, the relationship between these two borders (the temporal and the supernatural) is unknowable. It is enigmatic in the sense that while the spirits require full obedience from humans, they are also ready to punish their obedience. In killing Ikemefuna, Okonkwo seems to act at the behest of the Oracle who needs Ikemefuna as a sacrifice, yet Okonkwo is destroyed for partaking in the killing. Okonkwo's inadvertent killing of Ezeudu's son and the resultant banishment (along with his family) into exile seems to fulfil Obierika's warning to him for killing Ikemefuna:

And let me tell you one thing, my friend, if I were you, I would have stayed at home. What you have done will not please the Earth. It is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families. (53)

Okonkwo's life therefore allows us a reading of the relationship between the community and the metaphysical laws that hold its members in check. Unlike the communal reverence accorded to individual achievements, metaphysical entities in *Things Fall Apart* are not the respecters of persons: their laws transcend individual achievement. Great men like Obierika and Uchendu recount how many of their twins were thrown into the evil forest at the behest of the Earth goddess who considers them evil (*TFA* 100, 107).

Beyond physical/spiritual binaries, Achebe further presents juxtaposition of opposites: strong/weak, successful/failed, and freeborn/outcasts. Before colonial incursion, these categories of belonging in the community are defined by the level of individual success. Characters like Nwakibe, Okoye, and Okonkwo enjoy reverence and respect because of the titles and achievements they have attained, expressed in terms of their number of barns, wives,

and titles. They occupy a social space distinct from the likes of Okonkwo's father, Unoka, and Osugo, who are othered and denigrated, and who are at risk of being cast away from the community as evil and "woman" because "[the] clan judged a man by the work of his hands" (TFA 21). Referring to the weaker and unsuccessful members of the pre-colonial Umuofia as "woman" points to the gendered border in the community, the discussion of which is not the primary focus of this section of the thesis. My discussion rather foregrounds the connection between the narrative space of the text and its landscape of multiple crossings. Thus, while the first part of the novel presents the binaries as the socially accepted order, the topographical border-crossing of the white man is catalytic to more tense and subsequently re-(b)ordered socio-cultural space.

The missionaries had come to Umuofia. They built their church there, won a handful of converts and were already sending evangelists to the surrounding towns and villages. That was a source of great sorrow to the leaders of the clan.... None of these converts was a man whose words was heeded in the assembly of the people. None of them was a man of title. They were mostly the kind of people that were called *efulefu*, worthless, empty men. (115)

The above narration of both the Umuofia community and the status of its members before the advent of the missionaries reveals an important predisposition for border crossing: the weaker members of the community, whom Chielo, the priestess of Agbala, calls "the excrement of the clan", were available for the new faith (115). The social difference between the strong and the weak is almost similar to that which exists between the freeborn and the outcast, or the *osu*. According to the narrator, an *osu*

was a *person dedicated to a god*. A thing set apart – a taboo forever, and his children after him. He could *neither marry nor be married by the free-born*. He was, in fact, an outcast, *living in a special area* of the village, close to the Great Shrine. Wherever he went he carried with him the *mark of his forbidden caste* – long tangled and dirty hair. A razor was taboo to him. An *osu could not attend an assembly of the freeborn*, and they, in turn, could not shelter under his roof. (TFA 125/6; my emphasis)

The outcast system as a part of the traditional culture is an institution of outright socio-cultural bordering. That the tradition separates the freeborn from the outcast on spatial, cultural, physical, social, and religious bases is shown by the emphasised phrases in the above quote. Spatially, the outcast lives in a special area of the village and physically he/she carried the mark

of this forbidden caste, which socially segregates him/her from the rest and designates him/her as religiously different. Compared to the strong/weak, successful/failed binaries, the freeborn/outcast dichotomy is another level of categorisation. Unlike the weak and the failed, the outcast has no basis for societal recognition. Thus, he/she suffers total invisibility in the community.

The text narrates the rejection faced by two outcasts who enter the church where the new converts worship. Their physical border-crossing from the space of the community into the Church stirs a moment of identity assertion among the new converts. Mr Kiaga, the church leader, insists that the outcast be accepted into the new religion. His insistence causes a renegotiation of identity for the converts. It is also a disturbance that occasions a change of meaning in personal identity of those, who rejecting the outcasts, return to the traditions of the community. Accepting the outcasts on the other hand implies a debordering with them. For those who cross back into the traditional space, there is a zero-tolerance for border interaction with the *osu*. In relation to the outcast, the converts who return to the tradition uphold outright social exclusion. One of the converts questions: "You do not understand, ... What will the heathen say of us when they hear that we receive *osu* into our midst?" (125). This question reveals a community categorised into the "heathen" (non-converts), the "us" (the converts/the white man), and the "*osu*" (the outcasts). It is therefore symbolic that the converts' acceptance of the outcasts clearly marks a communal rebordering and reordering of the status quo. The converts become one with the outcast.

Thus, a community that formally operated in three distinct social categories of the strong, the effeminate, and the outcast, with the coming of colonialism re-borders into two social spaces: the "heathen" (non-converts), and the "us" (the converts/the white man). Moreover, the borderline which had existed between the likes of Okonkwo as the socially privileged, thereby othering the weak and the outcasts, is inverted. The converts (weak and the outcasts) become the privileged, for embracing the new religion, and others the formerly strong whom they call the "heathen". These shifts, which are not captured by conventional study of *Things Fall Apart*, expose the complexity and fluidity of the border which, according to Francis Nyamnjoh's reference to African physical and social mobility, is "multilayered, multivocal and multifocal dimension of everyday negotiation and navigation of myriad identity margins" ("Fiction and Reality" 653). The movements across identity spaces and margins shows the border, as held by some critics, as a zone of constant instability (Black 12; Schimanski and Wolfe, "Entry Points" 9; Brambilla 19).

From the moment of the fusion of the effeminates with the outcasts, the text presents dispossession of power from the formerly strong to the converts, authenticated by the colonial presence. This temporal moment is charged by clashes between the two territories. For instance, the killing of the royal python in Mbanta and the unmasking of the *egwugwu* spirit in Umuofia by the converts are borderland clashes that heighten cultural tension. With these clashes comes the ostracisation of the converts from “the life and privileges of the clan” (128), which is one of the measures taken to secure the traditional border. By the time of the clash, Okonkwo is already taking refuge in Mbanta, having been exiled with his family for seven years for inadvertently killing a kinsman.

Okonkwo’s presence in Mbanta at this initial point of cultural clash is very significant to the plot development and to reading the effect of multiple border-crossings in the life of the characters. It is also significant that his exile, which necessitates a topographical border-crossing into Mbanta, is situated at the textual border between Part One and Part Two of the novel. His exile comes between two narrative landscapes: Umuofia communal life and the imminent coming of the white man into the hinterlands. Schimanski and Wolfe hold that “the connection between the borders in the presented world of the text and the border which mark the text itself as a spatial form of presentation” is at the heart of border poetics (“Imperial Tides” 217). Thus, at this border, Achebe gradually introduces the coming of the white man, beginning with their coming to Mbanta where Okonkwo is an exile. This point of intersection between the narrative landscapes and the medial space of the text itself is immediately preceded by Obierika’s interior monologue:

When the will of the goddess [Okonkwo’s banishment] had been done, he [Obierika] sat down in his *obi* and mourned his friend’s calamity. Why should a man suffer so grievously for an offence he had committed inadvertently? ... He remembered his wife’s twin children, whom he had thrown away. What crime had they committed? The Earth had declared that they were an offence on the land and must be destroyed. (*TFA* 100)

The externalisation of Obierika’s worry (a symbol of socially silenced voices) at this point evokes a communal desire for liberation. Insight into Obierika’s mind foregrounds a transition into the second part of the novel. At this point, the narrative moves to the coming of Western culture. This connection in the space, the world of despair, presented in the text and the medial space it occupies in the narrative landscape of the text is typical of what border poetics reading foregrounds. The narration of Obierika’s despair, which is a microcosm of the unvoiced despair

of the marginalised Umuofians, is situated in a particular point in the text in which colonial incursion is inadvertent. Thus, the advent of the Western culture to Umuofia not only coincides with the protagonist's socio-spatial displacement, it also coincides with the mental disposition in a vast number of the people. The Western culture meets dispositions like that of the socially unrecognised outcasts and disturbed minds like that of Obierika. Their disposition hinders an outright confrontation with the colonial cultural exclusivity. Similarly, in Mbanta, Okonkwo's exilic status hinders his ability to confront the foreign culture. In Mbanta, Okonkwo is culturally unrecognised. His unbelonging dispossesses him of power. According to Uchendu, his maternal uncle, Okonkwo is forced by circumstances and fate to cross over to where he does not belong:

Why is Okonkwo with us today? This is not his clan. We are only his mother's kinsmen. He does not *belong* here. He is an exile, condemned for seven years to live in a strange land...A man *belongs* to his fatherland and not to his motherland. (*TFA* 106; my emphasis)

In this physical space (Mbanta), Okonkwo exists in dual identity: an insider and an outsider by virtue of his maternal and paternal affiliations respectively. He is simultaneously included as a welcomed refugee and excluded because Mbanta is not his fatherland. Though Okonkwo resists crossing beyond the traditional border and is applauded by Uchendu as one who, despite the identity crisis of the younger generation, remains resolute with the "grand old way" (*TFA* 133), he cannot confront the white religion in Mbanta as a stranger; his identity as a warrior is situationally disenabled.

The third part of the text narrates Okonkwo's return to Umuofia after serving his exilic term and opens with an indication of the effect of time on identity and belonging: "Seven years was a long time to be away from one's clan. A man's place was not always there waiting for him, as soon as he left, someone else rose and filled it" (137). Over time "Okonkwo has lost his place among the nine masked spirits who administered justice in the clan" (137). He lost almost all for which he was identified; a spirit, a warrior, and a voice for his people. As a community the ground has shifted; their border with the new religion has been compromised, but Okonkwo is determined to hold his ground. According to Anyokwu, his "psychology and ... outlook on life" are not impacted by his tempo-spatial separation from the village; rather, "he remains ... the same one-track-minded, unreflecting anachronism, in a rapidly changing world" (28). While Okonkwo stands strongly on his side of the border, insisting on ostracisation and frontal attack as a means of tightening security, Obierika perceives Umuofia in clear terms as a

compromised border. He laments the re-bordering which has empowered the weak and the effeminate who have joined the oppressive colonial administration, and which has invariably disempowered the formerly strong. Obierika tells Okonkwo: “Our own men and our sons have joined the ranks of the stranger ...” (140). They have become strangers with the stranger.

Obierika seems to symbolise the ability of African wisdom and culture to contend with the tension caused by the colonial incursion. By understanding the need for caution, and the fact that with the presence of the white man it is detrimental to insist on exclusive borders, Obierika presents an image of the borderland that permits interaction between cultures. His reasoning questions radicality. When it comes to Okonkwo, Obierika condemns his irrational involvement in the death of Ikemefuna and his insistence on fighting the white man. On the other hand, he sternly condemns colonial intolerance by accusing the white man of Okonkwo’s death. Just like Obierika, Mr Brown, the first colonial administrator in Umuofia, understands the need to respect Umuofia traditional culture. He believes that “a frontal attack [with the culture and the religion of the clan] would not succeed” (*TFA* 144). With characters like Mr Brown and Obierika, the text foregrounds the need for border inclusivity and tolerance for inter-cultural cohesion. But Okonkwo holds a contrary view. He believes that the only option for guarding one’s border is a frontal attack on the other. Hence, he questions why his people, the great Umuofia warriors, have lost the power to fight. He “mourned for the clan which he saw breaking up and falling apart, and he mourned for the warlike men of Umuofia who had so unaccountably become soft like women” (*TFA* 146).

Okonkwo’s return to Umuofia and the coming of Mr Smith, Mr Brown’s successor, undoubtedly redraws inter-cultural border lines. Okonkwo and Mr Smith, champions of exclusive bordering, represent as fierce a battle as that between Okonkwo and Amalinze the Cat at the beginning of the novel. While Okonkwo insists on the ostracisation of the white man and the converts, Mr Smith openly condemns his predecessor’s “policy of compromise and accommodation” (*TFA* 147) and embodies the exact opposite of the predecessor’s tolerance of the binaries: white and black, here and there, us and them. Mr Smith defies the cultural dignity of the Umuofia elders when he imprisons them (Okonkwo included) for three days for revenging the unmasking of an *egwugwu* spirit by a convert. Thus, in uprooting the elders and inciting a forced movement from the traditional to the Western (which the court building symbolises), Mr Smith breaches the contract of cultural tolerance and sets the stage for physical border conflict. His action reawakens Umuofia’s cultural border consciousness and brings them

to the realisation of the cost of allowing the colonial administration more space into their own territory.

Umuofia meets to deliberate on the desecration of the land by the unjust treatment of their elders at the white man's court. In this gathering, the narrator captures Okonkwo's position as "sitting at the edge" (*TFA* 163). Okonkwo's position at the edge of Umuofia's gathering denotes his position in the life of Umuofia after his return from exile. His position at the edge juxtaposes his central stage among the elders and grandees during Umuofia meetings earlier in the text, before the coming of the stranger (*TFA* 37). Okonkwo's respective positionalities in the first and second parts of the story evoke a movement along the chronological spectrum and narrative landscape set in motion by the colonial interruption of Umuofia's social order. His position at the edge confirms an imminent move away from the Umuofia, whose common identity as warriors has changed over time.

Even though Okonkwo crosses the physical border back into Umuofia after his exile, he resists crossing into the identitarian space Umuofia is occupying at the time of his return. His belonging to the Umuofia community becomes complicated since, in relation to them, he is both an insider and an outsider. His position at the edge of Umuofia's gathering allows him the opportunity to be the first to confront the four court messengers sent by the white man to stop their meeting. At this point of confrontation, Okonkwo, like his son Nwoye, straddles the borderland and has to decide which of the territories to belong to. Okonkwo's position graphically depicts him as the border figure, at the borderland, with the silent and muted Umuofia at one side of the border and the court messengers (representatives of the colonial administration) on the other side. He stands between the cultural border of the African tradition and the Western tradition, between the old and the new, the primordial and the change.

At the Umuofia meeting, Okonkwo's border guard function is re-enacted. He serves to check intruders and outsiders. Schimanski's description of the border guard as "intimately connected to the border itself" and one that embodies the idea that the border's "unavoidable status as a necessary supplement to the division of opposing pairs – the third space – at the same time as safeguarding that division" ("Reading Borders" 97) aptly defines Okonkwo's function at this moment. Okonkwo's preoccupation with the role of safeguarding his community recalls Peter Burke and Jan Stets' assertion that "the core of identity is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance" (225). So, for Okonkwo, defending Umuofia and its culture is his priority in his role as the community's "proud and imperious emissary of war"

(*TFA* 10). Thus, when the messenger says to him “let me pass” (*TFA* 163), he confirms the symbolic representation of Okonkwo as a border guard and a symbolic ‘gate’ into Umuofia. In the capacity of a border figure, Okonkwo’s elimination would imply a debordering, forceful subsumption into the colonial ethos, and final eclipse of Umuofia tradition by a Western episteme. Okonkwo, therefore, struggles once more to maintain Umuofia’s border, as he has done with the wars he has waged for Umuofia against their neighbouring towns. He cuts off the messenger’s head. But this time there has been an ideological shift in the mind of his people which has not occurred in him, and thus ideologically he does not belong with them. They have changed with the changing times. They have only been empowered against themselves but, as a community, they have been made powerless by colonial oppression. Okonkwo is disappointed,

[he] stood looking at the dead man. He knew that Umuofia would not go to war. He knew because they had let the other messengers escape. They had broken into tumult instead of action. He discerned fright in that tumult. He heard voices asking: “Why did he do it?”

He wiped his matchet on the sand and moved away. (163)

By moving away, Okonkwo performs a distancing from his community and the change their action represents. He disconnects finally with his people and hangs himself. Okonkwo’s action realises three forms of border-crossing: spatial, temporal, and symbolic. Spatial border-crossing is evident in Okonkwo’s movement from the gathering to his house and to the bush where he hangs himself. The second crossing is that achieved by his death: a temporal crossing from life to death. In the nature of the second crossing is the third border crossing: from being Umuofia’s anchor to becoming a stranger. Becoming a stranger informs the reluctance of his people, even his friend, to touch him at death. Their reluctance is evidenced in Obierika’s response to the district commissioner who has come to arrest Okonkwo. Obierika says: “We can take you where he is, and perhaps your men will help us [bring his body down]” (*TFA* 164).

Unearthing the linguistic implication of Obierika’s statement further, we see three categories of belonging at the instance of the request: “We can take you where he is, and perhaps your men will help us”. The three categories of belonging are symbolised by the pronouns “we”, “you”, and “he”. The “we/us” refers to Obierika and the people of Umuofia; the “you” are the white man and his men; and then there is Okonkwo, who ceases to belong with the “we” by

virtue of his suicidal act. Additionally, when Obierika answers the District Commissioner, “he is not here” (*TFA* 164), which implies “he is there”, it is an indication that Okonkwo no longer belongs with them. In death, therefore, Okonkwo does not cross the border into the Western tradition which he resisted, but he moves away from the community to which he earlier belonged. At death, Okonkwo’s identity changes from warrior to, according to one of his clansmen, “an evil”, “a stranger” (*TFA* 165). Ironically, at death, Okonkwo shares a level of identification and belonging with the white man and with the effeminates. According to Umuofia’s societal categorisation, he becomes a stranger with the strangers:

‘It is against our custom,’ said one of the men. It is an offence against the Earth, and a man who commits it will not be buried by his clansmen. His body is evil, and only strangers may touch it. That is why we ask your people to bring him down, because you are strangers. (165)

Thus, Okonkwo joins the strangers he fights not as a convert but as an abomination to his people. The text presents an ironic merging of the frontiers in the evil forest, which becomes a home for both the weak and the strong.

Furthermore, *Things Fall Apart* depicts the complexity of Umuofia’s internal bordering, which Irele succinctly captures in these words:

we are made aware that this coherence [of the Umuofia community] is a precarious and even factitious one, deriving from an inflexibility of social norms that places an enormous psychological and moral burden on individuals caught up within its institutional constraints, imprisoned by its logic of social organization, and inhibited by its structure of social conformities. (“The Crisis” 15)

If the Umuofia community had debordered their internal borders and allowed freedom of social and religious relationship for all its members, it is unlikely that there would have been grounds for a border crossing into the Western tradition. There is the possibility of preserved communal unity if the cultures that create internal bordering are dismantled. Communal unity could have been achieved if the categories that forced people into suffocating spaces and punishment (like the *osu* caste system, the killing of twins, and the punishment for murder cases like that of Ikemefuna and Okonkwo) were restructured. Referring to the effect of cultural violence in Umuofia, Heogberg believes that “people must believe that changing inconsistent traditions makes them stronger as a people, that cultural change is not the same as cultural decay” (70). Supporting Heogberg’s argument, Umuofia’s unity stood a stronger chance of being preserved

at the advent of foreign culture if Umuofia's culture had been more inclusive and its punitive and categorising measures based on "merits and drawbacks" as they did reducing the punitive consequences for violating the Week of Peace (71). *Things Fall Apart* shows that, to an extent, pre-existing borders determine the influence and the nature of the newly imposed borders.

From the foregoing border poetics reading of *Things Fall Apart*, we deduce that borders – geographical, familial, cosmological, communal, and symbolic – are interrelated, and that literature enables an adequate representation of this interrelatedness of the border. Borders do not exist in isolation; they are all connected in real, material ways, so that changes in one kind of border affect other kinds of borders too. The real geopolitical borders drawn on maps by colonial powers ultimately transform the logic of borders at every level. Border poetics, therefore, does not simply catalogue all the different kinds of borders that are revealed by the narrative. It contributes extensively to border studies by means of its unique ability to reflect on the entanglement of all the different kinds of borders that define and constrain human experience. The presentation of the details of borders and bordering – the connection and the complications of symbolic borders and how they are often mapped spatially – is literature's significant contribution to border studies. By these details also, literature exposes how internal border pressures affect the creation and appropriation of identity.

Finally, analysing the complexity of borders and bordering in *Things Fall Apart* raises a number of questions: What if the missionaries had followed the pattern of Mr Brown (*TFA* 152) and not Mr Smith in the principles of inclusive encounter? What if they had accepted the African philosophy of no absoluteness, *ife kwuru ife akwudebe ya*, and allowed the African tradition to exist alongside theirs? What if they had allowed a border crossing that encouraged conversation over conversion, "interrelatedness rather than separateness" (Eze, "Rethinking African Culture and Identity" 234); a border that has, in Achebe's terms, "[an] option for the outsider, the other" (*There was a Country* 14). However, like the contested physical borders of Nigeria, which were insensitively amalgamated in 1914 until independence in 1960 and intensified by Nigeria's encounter with colonialism, these internal fractures anticipated the kinds of division present in Ike's *Sunset at Dawn*, where the divisive legacy of imperialism manifests as intra-Nigerian conflict.

The Politics and Poetics of Ethnic Bordering in Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn*

My analysis of the border in this second section of this chapter critically engages the idea of identity and belonging as both linked to and delinked from geographical lines of demarcation. I contend that identity is both territorial and ideological. It is territorial because it appears to be geographically based, and it is ideological in the sense that it resides with an individual's freedom to decide where their affiliation lies, irrespective of natal affiliation. My analysis of Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn*, therefore, presents an arbitrary ethnic belonging (that relates to the creation of arbitrary national borders) in characters whose belonging is relational and situational, which is a positive pointer to ethnic debordering.

Born in 1931, Ike, like Achebe, was among the Nigerian elites trained by the European expatriates at Government College Umuahia and at University College Ibadan. As a civil servant and educator, he once served as the registrar of the West African Examination Council (WAEC). His oeuvre includes *Toads for Supper* (1965), which also thematises ethnicity although it does not reflect the civil war, *The Naked Gods* (1970), *The Potter's Wheel* (1973), *Expo '77* (1980), and five other novels including *Sunset at Dawn*, which is the primary text for my border discussion here. Achebe acknowledges Ike's literary ability when he states that "through prolific literary output, Ike took a well-deserved place at the vanguard of the continent's leading novelists" (*There was a Country* 112). However, despite Ike's prolificacy, he has enjoyed little scholarly attention compared to his counterparts, Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka (Oguzie 2000: 365; Egejuru 2007: 145). Among other reasons, Phaniel Akubueze Egejuru indicts educational stakeholders and scholars of African literature for the lack of critical engagement of Ike's works. For Egejuru, educational stakeholders and academics "get stuck on one or two authors and refuse to make room for others no matter the level of their achievement as writers" (145). Notwithstanding this lack of representation, it is clear that Ike has a phenomenal way of narrating history and letting the nuances of the ethnic border come alive in his story of the Nigerian-Biafran War.

As stated earlier, Nigerian borders existed ultimately as a product of colonialism and the 1914 amalgamation. Nigerian borders fall into the category of borders forced into being by an outside power (in this case the British colonial administration) exercising power of control through superimposition. David Newman affirms that,

the result of such superimposed boundaries were [sic] the division of tribal and ethnic territories between more than one state, or the inclusion of numerous ethnic groups in a single territory, giving rise to much of the ethnic strife that plagued Africa and parts of Asia until today. (“Borders and Bordering” 174)

In Nigeria, ethnic borderlines have remained very visible and volatile, resulting in internecine conflict. Ethnic incompatibility explains the background for the tension that besieged Nigeria immediately after independence in 1960, and which finally exploded into a devastating three-year civil war from 1967-1970. Discussions and scholarly studies on the Nigerian Civil War abound, both from within and outside of Nigeria. Writers have contributed by telling in the fictive and non-fictive modes the horrors of the three-year struggle that left an indelible mark on the history of Nigeria.

Besides *Sunset at Dawn*, there are other Nigerian civil war novels that fit into this discussion of ethnic bordering. Novels such as Flora Nwapa’s *Never Again* (1975), which employs a female protagonist to tell of the trauma and the fear of refugees escaping the war; Cyprian Ekwensi’s *Survive the Peace* (1976), which exposes the journalist’s activity at the end of the war and the confusion that followed the end of the war as intoxicating joy and despair in Nigeria and Biafra respectively; Elechi Amadi’s *Sunset in Biafra* (1978), which takes an autobiographical approach to Amadi’s experience of the war as a former Nigerian soldier; Wole Soyinka’s *The Man Died* (1979) which, like Amadi’s *Sunset in Biafra*, is a record of Soyinka’s imprisonment without trial by the Nigerian authorities at the beginning of the war and its traumatic effect; and Buchi Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra* (1982), which engages war narration from the perspective of the effect of the war on the cities located between Nigeria and Biafra, all relate different aspects of the war that are in most cases not captured by historical documents. However, *Sunset at Dawn* aptly fits the discussion of border and identity as it does not tell the woes of the Nigerian civil war in retrospect, like Flora Nwapa, whose interpolation of hindsight into her narration in *Never Again*, as Hugh Hodges observes, dulls the momentum of the narrative and creates the effect of the story told in retrospect (10). Hodges identifies with Chidi Amuta (“The Nigerian Civil War” 129) who observes that a lot of “sermonizing” by Nwapa undermines the representational effect of *Never Again* as a fiction, making it appear more as a report. *Sunset at Dawn*, on the contrary, discusses the moment of the war. It satirises the futility of ethnic bordering in the characters and in the inter-ethnic marriage between two of its major characters, Dr Kanu and his wife Fatima.

More than other novels on the Biafran war, *Sunset at Dawn* presents a shift in paradigm, presenting an ethnicity that transcends natal belonging to ideological affiliation; an ethnic allegiance conditioned by experience and conviction. Ike narrates the civil war as a first-hand witness¹⁵, yet maintains some distance from his narration. While he acknowledges Biafran resilience and creativity in the face of uncertainties, he also exposes the war as detrimental to Nigerian unity. Ike's engagement of a "deeper understanding of boundary perceptions [and affiliations]" corresponds with Newman's argument that popular representations such as literature enable "cultural, social, and political imaginations" of difference ("On Borders and Power" 20). The novel overtly re-creates the historical event of the Nigerian civil war, retaining, except for the names of the characters, the actual incidents, places, and dates of the war. Typical examples of verisimilitude are dates of the coups, the pulling back of Biafran troops to Opi (*SD* 18), the condemnation to death of the "commander of the triumphant Biafran forces who had proclaimed the Republic of Benin" in Biafra on September 23, 1967 (*SD* 28), the peace talk organised by the Organisation of African Unity in August 1968 (*SD* 271), and many others. However, despite its historical correspondence, the text constructs an imaginative aesthetic in order to unpack physical, ethnic, and ideological territories. It explores the place of characters in the struggle to maintain or resist categorised identities and their imbrication in the processes of bordering.

Reviewing the few critical works on *Sunset at Dawn* exposes discussions based on thematic and structural perspectives. Focusing on Biafran war songs in the novel, Francoise Ugochukwu (2012) and Maurice Taonezvi Vambe (2012) see these songs as an essential part of the Biafran struggle. For them, the Biafran war song is a powerful weapon for pan-Biafran identity creation and strengthening. Ugochukwu, a linguist with a special interest in Nigerian and intercultural studies, undertook a study of 16 Biafran songs, mostly recorded during the war. She considered the theme, structure, and style of the songs on their own and as they appear in fiction and non-fiction published between 1968 and 2006. She concludes that the Biafran war songs, which served as a morale-booster during the war, have remained part of the literary universe and should be considered a verifying marker of true Nigerian war narratives (Ugochukwu, slide 26). Vambe, on the other hand, considered the songs not only as "stylistic adornment", but

¹⁵Ike served as the registrar of the University of Nigeria (renamed the University of Biafra during the war) between 1963 and 1971. Thus, his novel is created out of first-hand experience of the civil war since Nsukka, the University town was the first eastern town overrun by the Nigerian army in 1967. Ike, like his character Prof Emeka Ezenwa, experienced the crossing of physical and intra-ethnic borders as he moved with his family from state to state, and as he encountered hostility from other tribes in Biafra.

more as “spiritual windows” that reflect Igbo political aspiration (17). Looking at the Biafran songs in *Sunset at Dawn*, Vambe concludes that,

the constant invocation of songs sung in the various Igbo languages and dialects help construct a monomyth in which Igbo nationalism is recognised by its reinvention of local and indigenous linguistic resources and cultural imagery to form an ideological tapestry of values that are meant to set the Igbos and Biafra apart from the rest of Nigeria. (17-18)

For Vambe, the Biafran songs are weaponised by the Igbos to achieve what he calls “ethnic absolutism” (30). His study shows that the Biafran songs are evocative of belonging. The songs are boundary and identity markers that accomplish the task of setting apart the Igbos and Biafrans. Beyond the ethnic relatedness of the songs, I examine the individual and collective negotiation of belonging during the war along lines of ethnic identification.

Clement Okafor has also examined *Sunset at Dawn* as a portrayal of “sacrifice and contested identity” (33). His interpretation of the text as conceptualised in the “ambivalent gaze of the hen on her unwanted child” (34) relates to Nigeria’s determination to wipe Biafra from the map through shelling and food blockades. Describing the text’s representation of the Nigerian army as symbolised by “the vicious hen that devours its young” (34), Okafor argues that *Sunset at Dawn* engages contested identity, a struggle to maintain opposing identities on an unequal battleground. Relating the eclipsed identity of Biafra to present day Nigeria, he further asserts that “the effect of the victory of the Eagle (Nigerian emblem) over the Rising Sun (Biafran emblem) has long lasting and dire consequences for the Biafran people and the identity for which they have sacrificed everything dear to them” (47). Okafor likened Biafran identity to the “comet” that once passed through the universe, but he believes that the brief moment Biafra persevered carries with it a lasting message that “an African nation can carve out a niche for itself even in this modern scientific world” (48). My discussion of *Sunset at Dawn* will, however, not concentrate on the appraisal of Biafran identity, but rather establish the dynamics and the complexity of ethnic identity, a complexity that calls for ethnic inclusivity.

Another critic, Chidi Amuta, reiterates that *Sunset at Dawn* is a masterful combination of artistic and historical realities (“The Nigerian Civil War” 95). Amuta examines the major characters of *Sunset at Dawn*, along with those of two other civil war novels, as literary creations of the author in relation to their social class. He analyses Dr Kanu, the protagonist, whose idealistic tendencies as a former university lecturer overshadow his life as the new

Biafran Director of Mobilisation. Amuta draws a sense of dichotomy between Dr Kanu's "political convictions on abstractions" and "the practical exigencies of a war situation" ("History, Society and Heroism" 65). He argues that although Dr Kanu is represented as a hero, he is also a victim whose tragic flaw is his inability to reconcile his idealism with the reality of the war. The present study relates to this idea of a divide between idealism and realism in the protagonist, and takes this further by examining him as symbolic of a resistant identity that represents the broader divide between Nigeria and Biafra. It also explicates in some other characters the process of ethnic identification that is based on personal conviction.

Having engaged some of the critical perspectives through which *Sunset at Dawn* has been theorised, my study proceeds with a border poetics discussion of the text to tease out instances of border-making and characters' modes and processes of identification with the border. *Sunset at Dawn* portrays physical bordering in the representation of territories and states captured by Nigeria, recovered by Biafra, and subsequently recaptured by Nigeria. In explicating the geographical relationship between eastern, northern, and western Nigeria, the narrator draws a kind of distinction between them. The geographical location marks ethnic orientation in Nigeria. While the easterners are mostly Igbos, otherwise called Biafrans, the northerners are mostly Hausas and Fulanis, and the southerners are Yorubas¹⁶. The physical bordering is reflected in the fact that, like the colonialist, the Nigerian government resorted to the notion of divide and rule. Both historically and in the novel, in 1967 the Nigerian government divided the nation into twelve states with the ulterior motive of creating internal divisions within the Biafran State. Thus, the narrator observes that, "the decision by Lagos [Nigerian Capital] to carve Nigeria into twelve states with effect from May 27 had been a clever move to undermine and destroy the solidarity of the people who now constitute Biafra" (*SD* 13). This is similar to the effect of the new religion in *Things Fall Apart*, which weakened the familial and communal bond, creating a divide between Okonkwo and his son Nwoye, the converts, and the entire traditional Umuofia community.

While the decision by the state government to divide the Eastern region into autonomous states reflects an exercise of power against the weak, it also introduced border consciousness between the core easterners (the Igbos) and the minor ethnic groups in the Eastern region. This rebordering created an intra-ethnic divide which encouraged sabotage. The minor ethnic groups

¹⁶ This is a broader categorization of the ethnic groups. It is not intended to disavow the more than 250 other ethnic groups within this broader categorization.

found in the internal rebordering “a most enticing bait” (*SD* 13) from the Nigerian government and the opportunity to have their own space outside Biafra. Reacting to this division of its territory, His Excellency¹⁷ (abbreviated as H.E in the novel), the governor of the eastern region, declares the secession of the region from Nigeria. This declaration of secession triggers the war.

The story in *Sunset at Dawn* begins four months after the declaration in the capital, Enugu, with the military training of groups of young volunteers from various parts of Biafra. They have responded to the call for volunteers to fight and catch the Nigerian enemy with machetes and their bare hands as the latter sleep in their trenches. This unrealistic idea initiated by Dr Amilo Kanu, the Biafran Director for Mobilisation, portrays him as very idealistic and fanatical about Biafran survival as an independent republic. The young volunteers from twenty provinces of Biafra parade with zest as they sing the declaration of their belonging and readiness to defend Biafra:

We are Biafrans

Fighting for our freedom

In the name of Jesus

We shall conquer. (1)

This song semantically depicts belonging: “We are Biafrans”, an indication of a distinction between the singers and their oppressors whom they desire to “conquer”. Linguistically, the assertion of what “we are” implies the renunciation of “Nigeria”, “what we are not”; a divide which, though it has existed long in the history of Nigeria, is reinforced by the war. By declaring the divide, the song presents a contested identity (Okafor 34). However, by referring to all as “compatriots” shortly after the song, the narrator acknowledges the national sense of unity of the pre-independence era. However, with the onset of the civil war, the nation divides into “Biafra” and “Nigeria”, into “we” and “our enemies”.

Immediately after this declaration of belonging by the volunteers, the text presents the reason for Biafra’s insistence on division: “they remembered the fate of so many Eastern Nigerians in one of the incidents that had prompted the breakaway of Biafra from Nigeria some months earlier – the 1966 pogrom...nauseous scenes of gouged eyes, ripped wombs and headless

¹⁷In the novel, Ike uses the abbreviation H. E which is His Excellency in full, possibly for anonymity. In reality, H. E. was the governor of the eastern state, His Excellency Major General Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu.

bodies” (SD 3). This reason remains a motivation for the determination of a non-negotiable borderline and the secession of Biafra from Nigeria. Thus, when at the end of the training Dr Kanu requests that those volunteers who are daunted by the resolution to defend Biafra with machetes should stay back in the hall, “all thousand volunteers joined in the march. Not one remained in the examination hall” (SD 9).

Ike shows that the struggle to define belonging straddles ‘who one is’ and ‘where one professes to belong’; their identity as individuals and as a member of a group. Before the outbreak of the war, while living in Ibadan in the western part of Nigeria with his northerner wife Fatima, Dr Kanu wishes that the Biafran war could be averted. However, when he realises that the war is impending, he reasons that if the federation was bound to break up despite him, it is crucial that he should be found on the proper side of the River Niger when the moment of separation comes (36). A similar sentiment, a correspondence between spatial belongingness and natal identity, was common to the easterners following the coups, the pogrom, and the tension that preceded the civil war (Achebe, *There was a Country* 87). This decision to be properly situated underpins Dr Kanu’s dedication to the Biafran struggle. He believes the ‘proper side’ to be the place where one belongs by virtue of birth. He correlates ‘who he is’ directly to ‘where he belongs’, and when he is made the Director for Mobilisation for the war, he gives all, including his life, to ensure that Biafra wins the war.

Dr Kanu’s life establishes the traditional notion of ethnicity as tied to geographical lines. He believes that he belongs to the Biafran territory and will therefore fight on the side of Biafra. He crosses over from Ibadan (the western part of Nigeria, which unites with the north during the war as common enemy to Biafra) back into the eastern part at the onset of the war. Ironically, he border-crosses with his northern wife, and one could say that, although he leaves Ibadan to return to the east as a mark of identity declaration, symbolically he remains at the border. Here, Ike satirises the idea of ethnic absolutism and the mind-set that defines ethnicity by geographical boundaries. Furthermore, Dr Kanu’s commitment to asserting his Biafran identity, like Okonkwo’s assertion of Umuofian identity, progresses to the point of the sacrifice of his own life for Biafra. As the Director for Mobilisation he discovers that Biafra runs short of human material to keep up its resistance as a community, and he metamorphoses from recruiting volunteers to volunteering himself to the war front. In *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo is reprimanded by his friend Obierika for his inability to see the changing border. Here, *Sunset at Dawn* follows a similar plot. Dr Kanu’s friend Akwaelumo and H.E. try to make him see the futility of self-sacrifice and the inevitable fate of the Biafran nation. Dr Kanu’s inability to

reconcile his idealism with the reality of a defeated territory leads to his death, as in Okonkwo's case, since he goes to the front as an amateur and sustains an injury which keeps him in the hospital where an enemy bomb kills him.

However, unlike Dr Kanu's resolve to be properly situated, the process of negotiating ethnic belonging in the text is not always determined by natal belonging. The novel juxtaposes Dr Kanu's decision with that of characters such as his wife Fatima, Halima, and Bassey, in order to question the assumption of border fixity. Regarding physical boundaries, Biafran borders and territories are clearly defined, with military actions expedited to save it when it is captured by the enemy, and the ingenious improvisation of military equipment and an airport in Biafran territory, all geared towards guarding physical borders. Nevertheless, for ethnic belonging, it does not strictly follow that characters are defined by their inclusion within a physical boundary. So, a character who is Biafran by birth decides to fight on the side of Nigeria, and vice versa.

In this case, the border is complicated and implicated in structures of belonging. Belonging ceases to be defined within the paradigm of nativity and physical territory. Fatima's development in the narrative depicts this notion of ethnic belonging as not tied to natal territories. She is a northerner but married to a Biafran, Dr Kanu, who during the war occupies the important post of Director for Mobilisation of the human resources needed to sustain the war against Biafra's enemy (the Hausa northerners). At first, when the war forces Fatima and Dr Kanu to leave the western part of Nigeria where they live and return to Enugu, the Biafran capital, Fatima holds on to her identity as a northerner, moreover the metropolitan nature of Enugu places no pressure on her to declare where she belongs. When the Nigerian army raid Enugu and Fatima loses one of her sons to the very first bomb, she is forced to relocate with her remaining son to her husband's village of Obodo. She topographically border-crosses from a less to a more intense ethnically spatialised space: from Enugu to Obodo. In Obodo, unlike in Enugu, Fatima encounters the opposing territory (Biafra) also embodied in her father-in-law Mazi Kanu Onwubiko, and the people of Obodo who initially consider her an intruder and a memory of the enemy. Fatima also feels that she has no need to integrate herself into the village, with whose inhabitants she shares no ethnic or linguistic traits. Thus, Fatima and the people of Obodo symbolize exclusive territories straddling tensed border.

However, in Obodo, Fatima's encounter with Halima enacts a process of ethnic de-territorialisation in the former. A visit by the latter, a Hausa woman like herself, gives Fatima a sense of identification with her kind. But this identification is troubled after listening to

Halima's traumatic story of her narrow escape with her two sons after the ruthless murder of her Biafran husband by her Hausa brothers during the 1966 pogrom, and the massacre of Igbo in the north (126-130). Halima further narrates how the bombing of her husband's village in the east by the Nigerian army killed her son and forced her to take refuge with her remaining son in Obodo. Fatima grieves with Halima and decides to help her and her remaining son, as well as other starving children in Obodo. In Halima, Fatima finds an identity that transcends ethnicity and space. She discovers in Halima the identity of victimhood which replicates in the other citizens of Biafra in Obodo, the children and the adults, suffering from the menace of Nigerian brutality. Fatima's realisation of common victimhood initiates in her the process of de-bordering with Biafra. She opens a relief centre to mitigate the effect of hunger on children, caused by the blockade. This gesture endears her to the people and invariably breaks the ethnic barrier between her and her husband's people.

By situating Halima and her traumatic story within the rural Biafran space and not in the metropolitan space of Enugu or in the perpetrator's northern space, Ike collapses boundaries and further problematises Dr Kanu's idea of proper situatedness. He also satirises Hausa brutality, which is incapable of distinguishing between its own and its enemy. Furthermore, in Halima, Ike conflates the identity of the perpetrator and the victim. As a Hausa, Halima is the perpetrator, and as a wife to the Biafran who is murdered in cold blood she is the victim. With this identity conflation, Ike blurs the line between perpetrator and victim and seems to say that war makes everyone involved complicit in its violence. This indictment reinforces his condemnation of the Nigerian-Biafran war and his advocacy for ethnic inclusivity. Fatima, however, associates with the victim identity of Halima, which her situatedness in the Biafran space foregrounds. Halima's escape from the North is a topographical border crossing that reinscribes her already symbolically crossed border evident in her marriage to a Biafran. Her encounter with Fatima, made possible by physical crossing enacts an epistemological exchange between her and Fatima. This encounter is a 'disturbance' (to use Burke's term) that initiates identity change and cultural border crossing in Fatima. This event is more significantly related to the identity change in Fatima than her actual border crossing from Ibadan to the east.

Over time Fatima realises that she is becoming more Biafran than Nigerian (*SD* 124) and, after sharing Halima's ugly experience, she decides to fully border cross from Nigeria to Biafra. Here, belonging becomes an issue of personal conviction, not of birth. Finally, the devastation caused by the bombing of Obodo, which kills Halima and her only remaining son as well as many other innocent people, seals Fatima's resolve. Halima's death becomes a marker of

Fatima's total disconnect with her Hausa ethnic identity. She therefore gives her total support to Biafra in the war and later travels to Libreville to support the propaganda for the Biafran state.

Bassey's intra-Biafran identity negotiation also confirms the fact that ethnic bordering is not necessarily a product of natal belonging. Bassey is from Akwaibom, a state in one of the minor ethnic groups in Biafra considered to be sabotaging the war. At first Bassey loses all he has when he flees from the war-torn Biafran capital to Umuahia. His fluency in the Igbo language prevents the guards at the border from identifying him as an Akwaibom; a saboteur. However, what truly challenges Bassey's identity negotiation is the betrayal by his own relatives, who dissuade him from evacuating his family when the Nigerian army approaches his village. On another occasion Bassey narrowly escapes death on his way into his village on a false invitation to a meeting sent by his kinsman to entrap him. Though he escapes, he realises that the Nigerian army has captured his village and that his wife and children are missing. He is deranged by the enormity of the betrayal of his kinsmen. His friends from a different ethnic group – Prof Emeka Ezenwa, Mr Onukaegbe, and Barrister Ifeji – take him to the hospital for treatment and ensure that H.E. helps him to stand again, due to Bassey's financial contribution in support of Biafra.

Having been helped to overcome his trauma, Bassey identifies more with his friends than his relatives. He tells them, "when I call you my brothers, I mean it literally. I feel towards you as though we are of one blood. There's nothing I'll keep a secret from you" (245). For Bassey and characters such as Fatima and Halima, personal experience and conviction, instead of biological ties, become deciding factors for ethnic affiliation. In them, the text establishes an inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic border crossing hinged on the ethics of proper conduct, and calls for national cohesion and a foregrounding of what is shared commonalities rather than differences. The text exhorts the idea of nationhood that transcends spatial borderlines or natal belonging.

Experiences such as loss, deprivation, and victimhood in *Things Fall Apart* and *Sunset at Dawn* are closely associated with identity negotiation and territorial assertion. Bassey's loss, Halima's loss, and even Fatima's loss of her son and husband, contribute to making the characters more fanatical about their identity and belonging. It sharpens division. Okonkwo's loss of his son to the new religion aggravated his resolute spirit of opposition. Ikemefuna's death is the moment of border decision for Nwoye, although at the time of this loss he is very young to be declaring his belonging. Yet, it initiated in him a renegotiation of belonging to the

traditional Umuofia society. Okonkwo's suicide is also a loss which serves to restore Obierika's voice as he accuses the white man of Okonkwo's death (*TFA* 165).

Border studies emphasise the idea of 'bordered' borders: a situation of further division within an already divided compartment, informed by the fact that boundaries are neither static nor concretely defined. Boundaries are dynamic, constantly renegotiated, "creating new realities and affecting the lives of people and groups who reside in close proximity to [them]" (Newman, "Boundaries" 123). Within the larger ethnic borders are intra-ethnic borders and the tendency for further divisions along tribal and cultural lines. At the beginning of the war there is a strong spirit of common belonging among the Biafrans, motivated by the desire to win the war. However, as the war progresses, the Biafran border disintegrates due to the traumatic nature of the war, the subsequent increase in sabotage by some Igbos who consider the war an opportunity for financial gain, and by some minor ethnic groups in Biafra who seem to have been forced into the war by the dominant Igbo ethnic group.

Individuals also gain or lose their affiliation to border spaces, affirming the dual functionality of inclusivity and exclusivity of borders. The parameters or spaces which include people simultaneously exclude others. While Fatima, Halima, and Bassey negotiate their inclusion within Biafra, the old man whose name is not mentioned in the novel presents a clear-cut intra-territorial exclusion as the war winds down. Psychologically he negotiates his identity as an outsider within, having suffered the traumatic experience of an "unprovoked midnight massacre of his people by a neighbouring Igbo village, on the flimsy and unfounded charge [that they were sabotaging the war against Biafra]. His wife and four teenage sons – his entire family – were slaughtered in one night" (*SD* 326). Coincidentally, this occurs when the old man is out of town negotiating for relief materials for Biafran refugees. Thus, with the slogan "we shall win" he mocks Biafra, and though territorially he is Biafran, ideologically he excludes himself from its border since from that moment, "he exclude[d] himself and prayed for the collapse of Biafra" (*SD* 326). He does not believe in the ability of Biafra to protect its borders against Nigeria since he holds that "a nation founded as a protest against genocide could not condone genocide within its own borders" (*SD* 326). This man, like Halima, embodies a criticism of the border from within. *Sunset at Dawn* therefore illustrates the multiplicity and equally complex nature of the border, where belonging is simultaneously

territorial and ideological. A number of other civil war narratives also illustrate that ethnic belonging does not correspond to familial affiliation to the geographical space¹⁸.

Sunset at Dawn not only questions ethnic fixity, it ridicules the idea of war as a solution to the problem of ethnicity in Nigeria. By depicting characters who, despite their territorial identity as Biafrans, suffer symbolic exclusion within Biafran territory, the text problematises the call for secession. Furthermore, the text indicts the ill-preparedness of Biafra for the war which costs Biafra both physical and human resources: “the hastily assembled and ill-equipped Biafra forces could not dig in anywhere. Biafran territory shrank like a cheap fabric after its first wash. The yellow-on-black Sun lost its dazzle and much of its authenticity” (*SD* 14/15).

This indictment is also depicted in the character of Dr Kanu who, though an amateur, gives his life for the fight, even when H.E. and his friend Dr Akwaelumo tell him how suicidal his decision is. Hence, the salient question: “will Biafra’s salvation come from the battlefield?” (349) asked by Mazi Kanu, Dr Kanu’s father, raises the key concern of this novel, which considers identity as fluid and unstable and thus suggests finding an alternative to ethnic fixity or other forms of exclusive bordering through war. It foregrounds the jeopardising of national unity by ethnic fragmentation and war and, by implication, asserts that to achieve national unity the idea of ethnic identity must not be mutually exclusive of national identity.

Furthermore, the text reflects the futility of the struggle for ethnic independence where national unity is a viable option, as well as the irrationality of human sacrifice as the best option against violent binary opposition. Dr Kanu’s death, which symbolises the death of Biafra and possibly an end to the struggle for secession, produces nothing but an eclipse of the soul of Biafra: “the soul of Biafra ascending into the heavens...like a soul journeying to another world... [and] Akwaelumo, Dike Bassey, Barrister Ifeji, Onukaegbe, etcetera. From Biafranism back to Nigerianism. Each person sought his own hideout to bury his discarded Biafran skin” (*SD* 358-359).

Yet the end of the war does not necessarily mean the end of the divide. The Nigerian civil war was an ethnic divisive marker that echoes what the Finnish geographer and border scholar, Anssi Paasi calls the “emotional landscapes of control” (“Bounded Spaces” 225; “A Border

¹⁸ Works such as *Sunset in Biafra: A Civil War Diary* (1973), which presents Elechi Amadi’s personal experience of the Biafran war, depict a delinking from natal connection to ethnic divide. Even though Amadi is from the southern part of Nigeria, he is ideologically opposed to the south; indeed, he aligns himself with the north during the war. Amadi refers to the Biafran secessionist group as rebel thereby indicting Biafrans for fighting a war of blame.

Theory" 23-24). This idea relates to events or symbolic figures that, according to Paasi, suggest a reposition and transmission of memories into national histories or iconographies. Border figures such as the civil war, even when they are physically removed or stopped, leave in people's minds a sense of division. In the case of war, such as the Nigerian-Biafran war, the traumatic residue of the war becomes a generational transmission of sensitivity to ethnic borders. The Nigerian-Biafran war retains similar significance to Paasi's reference to the relatively open Finnish/Swedish/Norwegian border that remains "a dividing line that exists deep in the national memory and even in the national iconography" (Paasi, "A Border Theory" 23). The war, Achebe argues, "changed the course of Nigeria" (*There was a Country* 2, 92). Adichie echoes Achebe's view, when in her interview she affirms that "the war not only destroyed lives, but ... robbed the generation of its innocence" (Interview on BBC HARDTalk). In the novel one of the major characters, Dr Akwaelumo, retains a strong conviction that the division already created by the war will continue even when borders are bridged (93), and his conviction seems to correspond with Nigeria's political present.

***Things Fall Apart, Sunset at Dawn* and the Persistence of Borders in the Nigerian Political Imagination**

Colonially initiated differences that became contested grounds for identity renegotiation and assertion have continued over the years. Borrowing from the analogy of the seam and the suture as applied by Meg Samuelson (2007) in her discussion of the transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa, I describe the arbitrary Nigerian amalgamation of 1914 as flawed suturing whose line of defect seems to connect every facet of Nigerian life. The metaphor of suturing evokes an imaginative picture of a borderland experiencing continuous volcanic border eruptions in the form of clashes and civil war due to colonial force, domination, and discrimination. The clashes between the traditional community of Umuofia and the over-zealous converts, with the latter enjoying the white man's support, replicates irrational support of the northerners by the colonial powers that informs present-day political inequality in Nigeria. The continued marginalisation of the former Biafrans in Nigeria's contemporary socio-political landscape confirms Mazi Kanu and Dr Akwaelumo's fear in *Sunset at Dawn*: "surrender by Biafra [is] tantamount to a subjugation of the Easterner to a position of inferiority in Nigerian politics for a long time to come" (*SD* 95, 355).

On another note, Nigeria and Biafra seem to have exhumed their 'discarded skins' (359) in the many shades of territorial and ethnic struggle that manifest in the present-day Nigerian political

landscape. Proliferation of separatist groups that threaten national unity is on the increase. According to Isidore Okpewho, "the last few years have seen the rise of ethnic organizations in Nigeria [...] each one adopting a name that announces a separatist identity: in the Hausa North, Arewa; in the Yoruba West, Afenifere; in the Igbo East, Ohaneze" (qtd in Eze "Cosmopolitan Solidarity" 110). These separatist groups, as well as other dissident groups from the mainstream ethnic territories such as Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC), Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and Niger Delta Republic Fighters (NDRF), have continued to fight for self-determination, independence, and ethnic purity by calling for the breakup of Nigeria. One of the latest calls for the breakup of Nigeria was the ultimatum issued by the Coalition of Arewa Youth of the Northern State on June 6, 2017. This group claimed that their call is a response to the "forceful lockdown of activities and denial of other people's right to free movement in the South-East by the rebel Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its overt and covert sponsors" (Tekedia 2017). Their ultimatum, which required Igbos to leave the northern part of Nigeria by October 1, 2017, triggered fresh agitations for national break up.

In addition to the secession calls, the latest threat to the Nigerian unity that seems to portend a repeat of the Nigerian civil war is the seeming nepotism of the present government which has been condemned as the worst in Nigerian history¹⁹. The government has strategically ethnicised the political system in such a way that the current heads of all security agencies in the federation are Northern Muslims, of which a substantial majority are Fulani (the ethnic group of the President, Muhammadu Buhari). Given this flagrant disregard and abuse of the rule of law, notable Nigerians, like the former president Olusegun Obasanjo, Wole Soyinka, General Theophilus Danjuma, Balarabe Musa and different religious bodies have suspected a grand plan by the Buhari-led federal government of 'Fulanization' and 'Islamization' of the whole country. This suspicion was given impetus by the hegemonic privileges of the Fulanis which has been on the increase since the inception of the Buhari regime²⁰. The possibility of

¹⁹ <https://punchng.com/nepotism-buharis-govt-worst-nigerias-history-junaid-mohammed/>

²⁰ Fulani-herdsmen have become security challenge to the local farmers and the country at large. Their unchecked pastoralism, with its attendant destruction of farmlands and incessant killing of indigenous people who resist their encroachment, is a matter of serious concern. And so far, the federal government has not investigated nor prosecuted anyone for the killings (Soyinka, "The Killing Culture of Neo-Nomadic" para 9-10).

The Fulani privileges further manifests in the Buhari-led government decision, in May 2019, to build six Ruga settlements (grazing reserve) in each of the thirty-six states of the country for Fulani herdsmen. This imposition is presently suspended following outcry of rejection from all the regions in Nigeria. It is described as a "violation

disintegration may be justified on the basis that state favouritism of one ethnic group, just like colonialism, instigates inter-ethnic resentment which is detrimental to Nigeria's unity.

In the face of all these suspicions and crises, Nigeria should learn from the historical import of colonialism and the civil war and strive for unity that is rooted in the rule of law and inclusive governance so as to leave no room for justified call for break up. Thus, striving for progress entails a conscious effort to dismantle detrimental difference in order to enable nation-building. National progress, according to Eze, entails not allowing the crimes of the past to stand in the way of socio-economic justice and human flourishing (*Race, Decolonization, and Global Citizenship in South Africa* 2018). He suggests forgiveness and openness to one another's humanity as basis for any meaningful social and political development in Africa. Though Eze refers particularly to South African apartheid legacy, his views are applicable to Nigeria. Holding on to the hurts of colonialism and the Nigerian-Biafran war reinforces socio-ethnic and political injustices; instead of bridging differences, it fuels exclusivity which is lethal to national development. Although the colonial amalgamation of Nigeria was for purposes of colonial administrative convenience, void of considerations of ethnic difference, every effort must gear towards the survival of Nigeria as one nation. *Things Fall Apart* and *Sunset at Dawn*, though born of twentieth-century Nigerian history, resonate with the twenty-first-century call for a rethinking of Nigerian national and ethnic identity. Considering the need to rethink national and cultural identity as a necessary challenge facing African societies, Eze strongly advocates

Go[ing] beyond the vestiges of relativism associated with the anticolonial struggles and which have become embedded in parochial ethnic and tribal loyalties. The challenge is to weave a more universal solidarity that can accord individuals anywhere in Africa [in Nigeria] their rights and dignities regardless of their gender, [ethnicity] and ancestry. ("Rethinking African Culture and Identity" 236/7)

Meeting this challenge transforms borders into frontier spaces of positive encounter, interaction, and exchange. It enables transcendence beyond the division and intolerance created by the arbitrary unification of Nigeria as one nation and the lopsided colonial management of

of provisions of our constitution, on the administration of land in Nigeria [and a] total violation of valid laws" (Nwodo, Daily Post n.p). Nnia Nwodo, who is the president of the Igbo socio-political organisation, Ohaneze-ndi-Igbo, describes Buhari's attitude as anarchic. Edwin Clark also condemned the Ruga policy in strong terms, stating that it should be completely withdrawn. He argues: "if they [Federal Government] say they have just suspended it and they are bringing it back, no Nigerian will agree to it and that may be the beginning of the disintegration of this country" (Clark, Punch n.p.).

the amalgamated ethnic groups. This transcendence is achievable “only through multilevel, multi-sectoral and long-term approaches that involve transformation at the international, national and local levels. This, in turn, demands cultural changes and new kinds of thinking on both sides of any given border” (Kolossov and Scott 13/14). It demands a complete “de-colonial epistemic shift” that achieves total delinking from the matrix of colonialism (Mignolo, “Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity” 453) and a transcendence beyond age-long colonial accusation. Transcending border conflict entails the acceptance of Achebe’s no absoluteness and Ike’s negation of proper situatedness correlating directly with natal space. It also demands the decoding of the characteristics of social differences that encourage exclusive ethnic relationship, and an embrace of the elements that unite.

Conclusion

This chapter has utilised border conceptualisations as analytical tools to examine the material and symbolic movements of characters along cultural, national, and ethnic landscapes. The chapter has engaged *Things Fall Apart* and *Sunset at Dawn* as border fictions premised on Nigerian history, particularly the colonial encounter and the Nigeria-Biafran war. Nigerian history typifies the fluidity of borders and the ability of border impositions and border proliferation occasioned by the colonial scramble that sutured ethnic groups of distinct orientations – culture, religion, language, appearance, and form – together into a single nation. The nature of Nigerian colonialism gave no room for consideration of the geographic and ethnic composition of the Nigerian territories and their inhabitants.

Things Fall Apart and *Sunset at Dawn* conceptualise the lived experiences of shifting cultural, national, and ethnic borders. The novels establish that borders, especially ethnic borders in Nigeria (and by extrapolation, elsewhere in Africa including Rwanda, Cameroon, and Zimbabwe, who have experienced the colonial effect of arbitrarily sutured ethnic borders), involve constant performance of bordering, rebordering, and debordering that continues to challenge the traditional notion of the border as fixed. Cultural and ethnic bordering in Nigeria beyond lines on the map and natal affiliation, as aptly captured in the analysis, exhibits multi-dimensional possibilities of bordering that impact on society and spaces of belonging. Thus, while borders create a binary distinction between the ‘here’ and the ‘there’, the ‘us’ and the ‘them’, and the ‘included’ and the ‘excluded’, the distinctiveness of the border is challenged in everyday interaction, made possible through the narration of everyday life.

Newman's conception of borders and border-crossing as spatial categories or cultural affiliations and identities that create and reflect difference presents the idea of the border as a line, not only on a map but in between binary oppositions necessitated by social and cultural differences. They are lines where "categories, spaces and territories interface" ("Contemporary Research Agendas in Border Studies: An Overview" 36) and around which borderlands exist as areas of negotiation and possible hybridisation. While the idea of the borderland and life at the borderland remains more perceptible as material, characters like Obierika, Nwoye, and Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart*, as well as Fatima in *Sunset at Dawn*, retain the possibility of being analysed as straddling two symbolic spaces at different times. This ties with the assumption in border studies that "cultural and social borders are characterized by borderland spaces and zones of transition" ("Contemporary" 38) which individuals inhabit as they negotiate their belonging. Straddling the borderland, however, does not always result in border crossing. Hence, while some characters remain at the borderland as hybrids, like Obierika, accepting the characteristics of the binary spaces, others (such as Nwoye in *Things Fall Apart* and Fatima in *Sunset at Dawn*) are transients whose stay at the borderland results in a defined border crossing and identity.

Though many critics assert that the arbitrariness of the origins of Nigeria will remain a threat to the unity of the nation, this chapter's re-reading of *Things Fall Apart* and *Sunset at Dawn* from the perspective of the border challenges the continual linking of disturbed national unity to colonial incursion and ethnic differences. This chapter calls for an ideological shift in ethnic consciousness and a re-thinking of the amalgamation. The chapter contributes to the ongoing discussion of national stability by arguing for a disconnection from the pessimism concerning amalgamation which negates the possibility of national unity. By projecting Obierika's border reasoning, as well as Fatima's, Halima's, and Bassey's ethnic debordering hinged on the course of reasoning and comradeship, against Okonkwo's idea of 'frontal attack' and Dr Kanu's notion of 'proper situatedness' informed by natal affiliation, the novels debunk cultural and ethnic fixity. The texts envision a re-ordered cultural and ethnic space that allows for collaboration for nation building. In Obierika, Uchendu, Fatima, Halima, and Bassey, the texts establish a border crossing that results from experience and conviction and an ethnic belonging that transcends spatial territories. *Sunset at Dawn*, by generally satirising the war and questioning its essence in national history, exposes the bane of ethnic division and criticises the use of force in conflict resolution.

CHAPTER THREE

The Dynamics of Class Border and Bordering

When in the same society, whereas one man has more than enough to feed himself, his dogs, cats, children and monkeys and many other men are weak and thin from hunger and their children are suffering from kwashiorkor, this is violence...!

It is ... violence consciously maintained, whetted and intensified by those who operate the system.

Iyayi, *Violence* 186

Introduction

In Chapter Two, I used Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Chukwuemeka Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* to examine the representation of cultural and ethnic borders, two of the major issues engaged by Nigerian novelists of the first generation. My analysis foregrounded the fluidity and complexity of intra-communal and inter-ethnic borders. *Things Fall Apart*, for instance, presents a continuously negotiated intra-communal and inter-cultural border heightened by the incursion of colonialism and a new religious tradition. Through the narration of the civil war, *Sunset at Dawn* examines the nuances of the ethnic divide that is both linked to and delinked from natal and spatially correspondent territorialities. These two texts demonstrate the interconnectedness of borders, whereby various sorts of border and bordering manifestations are directly and indirectly linked to the arbitrary colonial border. This chapter focuses on Festus Iyayi's *Violence* (1978) and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000), in order to foreground the import of the increasing class difference attending the unprecedented surge of wealth in Nigerian post-civil war history. The chapter foregrounds the historical shift from the ravages of the civil war to the scandals of economic mismanagement, and the consequent shift of literary attention from the coloniser to the internal power dynamics of Nigerian society.

With the oil boom of the 1970s, which immediately followed the end of the civil war, Nigeria experienced a phenomenal rise in its economy. In Bill Freund's words, the nation's wealth at this time "seemed to be almost incalculably high, sufficient at a go to pay for twenty-four months of imports; ... totalling N4.187 million at peak in April, 1975"²¹ (93). As a result of oil

²¹ N4.187 million is equivalent to 12,000 US dollars.

surplus, a greater number of cities developed and there was massive migration of people from the rural areas, as well as from outside of Nigeria, to the cities. As the boom gathered momentum, the cities of Nigeria took on “the character of gold rush towns” (Freund 97). The influx of migrants from the rural areas and from outside Nigeria occasioned the expansion of cities, thereby making the city a melting pot and a space that assures the “autonomy of individual existence,” an attribute which Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe identified as also fundamental to Johannesburg in South Africa in the twentieth century, in addition to the more general process of urbanisation in the modern West (19).

The oil boom created “an atmosphere of prosperity” (Sil 367) and with oil dependence and excess money in circulation, corruption increased tremendously. The social elites and the politicians devoted themselves to an accumulation of wealth and power. Chinua Achebe succinctly described this era in these words:

The post Nigerian-Biafran war era saw a “unified” Nigeria saddled with a greater and more insidious reality. We were plagued by home-grown enemy: the political ineptitude, mediocrity, indiscipline, ethnic bigotry, and corruption of the ruling class. Compounding the situation was the fact that Nigeria was now awash in oil-boom petrodollars A new era of great decadence and decline was born. (*There was a Country* 243)

The rise in material wealth in Nigeria became not only a catalyst for material border crossing from the rural to the urban areas, but an instigator of heightened class differences. The oil boom became a distraction in that, instead of initiating lasting reconciliatory and restructuring plans towards national cohesion and stability after the civil war, corruption and political dictatorship occasioned a socio-economic gap between the political/social elites and the masses. With the migration of people from agrarian communities to the industrial cities, the second generation writers use the city as its theatre for engaging socio-political interaction between the classes. The city, therefore, became a space of interaction and categorisation of class difference, exposing unprecedented exploitation by the elites.

Nigerian writers of the second literary generation responded to the unacceptable condition to which the political and economic malfeasance has subjected the populace. They challenged the divide created by the irresponsible management of national wealth and political positions. Many of the writers became literary activists and “active catalyst[s] of social change” (Osofisan 164; Ikiddeh 166), committed to realising a cohesive nation devoid of ethnic and other forms

of social bordering. Literature of this era, therefore, shifts from nationalism to engage the everyday life that exposes the disillusionment characterising the post-colonial moment and the decadence of post-civil war Nigeria. In contrast to the first generation's concern with colonialism, national identities, and ethnic (dis)integration, second-generation writing concentrates more on day-to-day life in terms of social differences and the ways in which these differences affect the individual. There is a shift from communal to individual concerns in this generation, occasioning a new way of thinking about borders and bordering. Revolutionary works such as Labo Yari's *Climate of Corruption* (1978), Festus Iyayi's *Violence* (1978), Bode Sowande's *Our Man the President* (1981), Iyayi's *The Contract* (1982), Chris Abani's *Masters of the Board* (1985), Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), Abubakar Gimba's *Innocent Victims* (1988), Isidore Okpewho's *The Victim* (1970), Kole Omotoso's *Just Before Dawn* (1988), and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000) challenge the lavish, excessive lifestyle of wealthy Nigerians in a period of moral decay and political scandal that impacted strongly on ordinary life.

The major difference between the first- and second-generation Nigerian writers is that, whereas the first generation was concerned with the effects of colonialism on the construction of difference, the second generation is concerned mainly with class difference. In this chapter I consider class difference as a symbolic bordering that does not exactly correspond to a geographical construct, but nonetheless has a physical dimension and is manifested in material spaces. Impalpable borders such as class difference, in David Newman's words, "order our lives ... invisible to the human eye but they nevertheless impact strongly on our daily life practices" ("Borders and Bordering" 172). Daily practices and management of social difference determine, as Newman suggests, the extent of inclusion and exclusion of individuals to material wealth, privileges, and spaces. Class borders reflect border management employed by and for the benefits of the elites or people who are included in the ambit of power. Economic and political privileges create divisions between the upper class and the lower class, and between the government and citizens. In some cases, these privileges have a spatial materiality, in that they are performed in the actual spaces of habitation; the social and political elites in reserved residential areas and the lower classes at the city periphery such as ghettos, shanties, slums, and abandoned buildings in the inner city. In places or cities where there is insignificant residential segregation, where the classes co-habit within the same geographical space, the lower classes are still marked off as different by poverty, struggle, and other forms of deprivation. They are relegated to marginal positions and menial jobs.

The poetics of class border transcends mapping what and where borders are. It interrogates how borders function in different settings. Beyond considering class borders as dynamic spaces of socio-political habitation, I examine the conscious processes of construction and management of borders. This position hinges on a notion of the border as an institution (Paasi, “Boundaries as Social Processes” 1998; Newman, “The Lines That Continue to Separate Us” 2006; Newman, “Contemporary Research Agendas” 2011). Newman strongly asserts that borders are created, and once created they are managed in the collective interest of those included within the border. Comparing the border to other institutions that are guided by internal rule, he observes that “border institutions govern the extent of inclusion and exclusion, the degree of permeability, the laws governing trans-boundary movement – exit from one side of the border and entry into the other side” (Newman, “On Borders and Power” 14; Newman, “The Lines That Continue to Separate Us” 147; Newman, “Contemporary Research Agendas” 35; Newman, “Borders and Bordering” 172). This echoes Paasi’s delineation of the mediatory function of the border when he claims that “boundaries are both symbols and institutions that simultaneously produce distinctions between social groups and are produced by them. Nevertheless, they not only separate groups and social communities from each other but also mediate contacts between them” (“Bordering as Social Processes” 80).

Border scholars assert that the state and the elites decide the rate of border permeability and control the politics of economic and political classification (Newman, “Borders and Bordering” 175; Newman, “The Lines that Continue to Separate Us” 148; Kolossov and Scott 5). In Newman’s words, “the criteria determining where and how the border is to be constructed in society and/or space, are drawn up by the societal managers, usually acting in their own political, economic or institutional interests” (“Borders and Bordering” 175). In the same vein, Vladimir Kolossov and James Scotts acknowledge that it is the power elites who decide when, how, and for whom to open and close borders, as well as how stringent movement across the border should be (5). The societal managers, therefore, control and/or hinder border crossing from the economic hinterland to the mainland. In Iyayi’s *Violence*, for instance, the illegal awarding of contracts, negligence of corrupt practices, military dictatorship, exploitative labour, and sexual violence reinforce class borders and constitute measures of border control. In the case of the class border, socio-economic categorisation presents structures of “top-down” relationships where border control on the part of the privileged implies the use of the lower class for material and emotional satisfaction. In Chapter Two border interaction exposes marginal individuals or groups (Okonkwo and Biafra for instance) engaged in “bottom-up”

border-crossing resistance – resisting forced integration into the dominant territory. However, this chapter presents a situation of “top-down” resistance that exhibits the managed exclusion of the lower class from affluence and power. “Top down” and “bottom up” are Newman’s terminologies in relation to trans-boundary interactions within the border institution, which will be further engaged in the analysis of the texts (“On Borders and Power” 14-15).

Based on the conceptual framework of the border as an institution where contacts are mediated, I read violence in the forms of exploitation, rape and denial of voice in the texts as tools for socio-economic border control in the respective geographical and symbolic spaces of the city and trans-boundary interface. This reading resonates with Paasi’s assertion that “[t]erritorial power and control manifest themselves not only in the border landscape but also in places, practices, and discourses in which violence, the possibility for violence or memories of violence are implicitly or explicitly present” (“Boundaries as Social Processes” 79). Focusing on Festus Iyayi’s *Violence* (1978) and Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain* (2000) as representative works of the second generation, I argue that violence in political and social systems typifies systemic measures of border management deployed in maintaining coded social difference. These texts present the performance of border construction and management by their representation of characters at the class border. Iyayi and Ndibe, through the narration of physical, sexual, and discursive violence, present “the violent performativity of bordering practices designed to exclude, abandon, and/or kill the ‘Other’” (Parker and Vaughan-Williams, ‘Critical Border Studies’ 731). They present contestation between socio-economic and political classes that characterise the second generation of Nigerian novels.

The second generation of Nigerian writers loosely spans the post-civil war period to the end of the twentieth century. Novelists of this period are mostly social realists who engaged with the problems of socio-economic divisions among citizens, brought about by the increase of corruption and political abuse that faced Nigeria at the end of the civil war. Femi Osofisan refers to the writers of this generation as “the young generation” in relation to Achebe and Soyinka’s (first) generation. Osofisan avers that this generation of writers, unlike the preceding generation, “explor[es] experiences taken directly from mundane, quotidian life and from the stress of living in a difficult neo-capitalist economy” (165). Emphasising the commitment to the moment – social decay – he describes this literary era as a shift from “the shrine or ancestral grove ... to the dusty streets” (164-165). The second-generation writers present characters who are part of a society torn apart by hardship, characters who, because of socio-economic

deprivation, exist as the underdogs in a society that promotes the survival of the strong and the destruction of the weak.

The analogy of moving literature from the ancestral grove to the dusty streets explains the second generation's deviation from a nationalist role. They move from writing out of the necessity to present a nation as respectively united or fragmented by nationalism or ethnicity, to depicting the masses' struggle for survival in a society where systems and institutions of inclusion and exclusion are "determined by political and social elites as part of societal ordering and compartmentalisation" (Newman, "The Lines" 148). The second generation thematises social events and focalises spatial border-crossing from the native community to the city. Most of the novels of this generation are set in the city in order to capture the individual's escape to anonymity from the moral and cultural codes that characterize native communities. The anonymity of the city space and the constant struggle for survival relates to the distinctness of the individual.

Despite the apparent thematic clarity of the second generation, the classification of texts is still subjective and at times problematic, since texts speak to multiple situations simultaneously, and in Osofisan's term the areas of classification "can never be mutually exclusive" (166). For instance, while Iyayi's *Violence* is classified as a second-generation novel, Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000) cannot be easily classified. Critics such as Ernest Emenyonu classify *Arrows of Rain* as "a blueprint for the second generation of African novelists,"²² but others, such as Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton (2005:10) and Obi Nwakanma (2008: 4), classify it as a third-generation novel. For Adesanmi and Dunton, it is one of the first works of fiction "that increased the international visibility of the third-generation novels" (11). Texts are classified based on their milieu, medium, and message. Thus, the inconsistency in the classification of *Arrows of Rain* is related to its date of publication – 2000 – which is at the overlap of the second and third generation. It was published at a time when literary works addressing the concerns of the contemporary time had already started appearing, created predominantly by Nigerians in the diaspora. Moreover, Ndibe was resident in the US. However, in terms of the text's message, it engages the disillusionment of postcolonial Nigeria, which is a major concern of the second generation.

²² Praise for *Arrows of Rain*.

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/238064/arrows-of-rain-by-okey-ndibe/9781616954574/>

Given the above, it remains true that “the project of defining and delimiting the boundaries of a literary generation can never escape the problem of semantic, thematic, and even ideological indeterminacy” (Adesanmi and Dunton 13). Consequently, my discussion of *Arrows of Rain* as a second-generation novel (in line with Ernest Emenyonu’s description) is based on its thematic concerns, which is a narration of the complexity of social class interactions heightened by the military take-over of government. *Violence* and *Arrows of Rain* highlight exploitation, rape, and denial of voice as structural violence; a violation of what Nuttall and Mbembe call “‘terms of recognition’ – the ability and capacity of the poor to exercise voice, to debate, contest, and oppose vital directions for collective social life” (5-6).

Class Border Performativity and Festus Iyayi’s *Violence*

Trained in the former USSR (now Ukraine) and in England, Festus Iyayi returned to Nigeria in 1980 and lectured at the University of Benin until his death in 2013. His experience of socialism in the USSR influenced his perception of economic injustice. It made him a radical critic of the stark corruption and political degradation of the Nigerian government and society. His novels depict the plight of the masses in the contexts of ethnic wars and social disorder. His second novel, *The Contract* (1982), implicates political excesses. Interestingly, in his protagonist Ogie Obala, who returns from studies outside the country, Iyayi presents the moral weakness of individuals faced with the struggle of choosing between socio-economic territories created by corruption. Caught between the stark contrast of wealth and poverty, Ogie compromises his resolution to fight corruption and joins his father, Chief Ewe Obala, and the other corrupt officials in the decayed system. Iyayi’s Commonwealth Writers award-winning novel *Heroes* (1986) reflects on the Nigerian civil war. In *Heroes*, Iyayi presents the civil war as purposefully orchestrated by the political elites. He portrays the betrayal of the masses by the rulers who, for selfish political benefits, incited the masses (the ethnic groups) against each other in war. His last book, *Awaiting Court Martial* (1996), is a collection of fifteen short stories, united by the theme of individuals caught in the web of social decay. More than Iyayi’s other novels, *Violence* vividly presents socially constructed and managed class categorisation through a representation of the gulf between individuals of different economic status and through the performance of inevitable verbal and nonverbal interclass interaction. *Violence* foregrounds the class border as consciously created and managed by the social elites in order to define and maintain identities.

Critical analyses of *Violence* have highlighted the milieu, concerns, and linguistic aesthetics of the text as social realism. Critics such as Narasingha Sil (1993) and Innocent Chiluba (2007) have focused on its Marxist ideology. Chiluba sees the text as an explicit depiction of social injustice and a call for working-class revolution. He highlights the text's emphasis on the use of language for revolutionary ends. Using a praxis-discourse interpretative tool²³, he investigates Iyayi's use of language for socio-economic causes ("The Literary Artist" 6). In so doing, Chiluba argues that the language of deprivation in the text is performative and justifies the revolutionary action of the working-class characters. He states that,

in the words and phrases *became silent, worked into the evening, became worn out, leaned against, tired out, exhausted, hungry ...* Iyayi draws the picture of extreme suffering as a result of poor work conditions and appeals to our sense of pity. He achieves cohesion through stylistic parallelism as he drives home the intense atmosphere of the exploitation of the Nigerian worker: *their backs ached, their stomach ached, and their head ached also.* (Chiluba 9, emphasis in original)

Chiluba believes that Iyayi's radical ideological position against an unjust society is reflected in his use of language and images that mirror the deplorable condition of the working class. Like Chiluba, Sil asserts that the text, projecting Marxist ideology, directly conveys the message that, having suffered from poverty and lack of opportunity, the oppressed must answer "violence with violence". Thus, he groups Iyayi among the writers whose works represent the climax of Marxist discourse in Nigeria (Sil "Nigerian Intellectuals and Socialism" 377-378).

Similarly, Niyi Akingbe, Christopher B. Ogunyemi, and Abosede A. Otemuyiwa (2011) argue that *Violence* reflects society's and Iyayi's radical ideology. They classify the text as socially relevant in its exposition of societal ills and its subsequent call for social change. For Akingbe et al., violence in the text is both "an instrument and outcome" (306), since it is the means and the ends in the hands of the masses in the struggle to challenge existing power relations. I draw on this explication of violence as a form of protest by examining violence not only as a tool in the hands of the poor, but a tool in the hands of the elites, employed to ensure the maintenance of the socio-economic border in a top-down resistance to border crossing. Iyayi's delineation of his "characters into two significant classes, elites and working class" (Akingbe et al. 307)

²³ The discourse of praxis "is a pragmatic-oriented language study that investigates (in this paper) how the author uses language to pursue a socio-economic cause ... [it is] enmeshed in a pragmatic 'verbal duel' with social situations and with people who possess political authority. Language use is hereby taken for granted as what Wittgenstein calls 'practice'" (Chiluba 6-7).

exposes a bordering which I hope to engage from the perspective of interclass interaction and identity negotiation. This perspective enables an envisioning of the details and processes of alterity fundamental to the place of literature in border studies. Examining the processes of interactions across social locations foregrounds the unique ability to capture the functional and complex aspect of the border in narrative.

Violence tells the story of individual families and characters that represent the different categories of material possession. Narrated from an omniscient point of view, the narrator introduces the reader to the details of border interactions at the intra/inter levels through a realistic depiction of the material and psychological spaces of the characters' environments and mind sets. Material territorialities are fundamental to the depiction of class bordering, since class significations are generally etched onto physical space. Class borders play out more in the city space, where characters or groups struggle for survival. The novel tells the story of the protagonist, Idemudia, and his wife, Adisa, whose survival is intricately connected to the social elites Queen and her husband, Obofun. In the novel, socio-economic conditions correspond with territorial realities. Idemudia, Adisa, and their neighbour, Papa Jimoh, are situated in a section of the city where damages inflicted by rain on the home space compound the risk of existing at the margins of the economy. On the other hand, the upper class, symbolised by Queen and her husband Obofun, live within a covetous environment of material excesses. From these class-correspondent territories, individual classes enter into the public – the road, Iyaro park, First East Circular junction, and the hospital – for exchanges, such as trading labour and blood. Hence, these private and public spaces are sites of interaction and identity negotiations. They are sites of class-border performativity, affirmation, and control.

In my discussion of *Violence*, I will focus on different levels of class interaction, which I hope will assist in the explication of socio-economic bordering. The interactions centre on two major units of encounter in the different physical spaces. The first interaction (otherwise called intra-class interaction) foregrounds interactions within the classes: Idemudia and his wife in their weather-threatened room and Obofun and Queen in their mansion. The second level of interaction, which I term interclass interaction (trans-boundary in Newman's terms), highlights the intersection of classes in public and private spaces. Public interclass interactions occur in the parks and hospitals, while private interclass interactions occur in the chalets and bedrooms, where Obofun and Queen sexually oppress Adisa and Idemudia. These units of interaction are symbolic of social class realities and complexities in the Nigeria that Iyayi represents.

In the first scene of the text, Idemudia wakes up on a rainy Sunday morning, hungry and without any hope of food. He engages in a verbal exchange with his wife, Adisa, who holds him responsible for their poverty. Upset by his wife's inability to understand his struggle to earn a steady income and her threat to leave him for wealthier men, Idemudia gets up to leave the house, but his wife blocks his way holding onto his trousers. As he struggles to free himself his trousers tear and he angrily slaps his wife, causing blood to trickle down from her nose. Idemudia and Adisa's conflict typifies an intra-class performance of frustration, through which Iyayi draws the reader into a graphic description of the living conditions of the poor. Iyayi also situates Idemudia and Adisa in deplorable socio-economic material conditions that expose their societal status. They live in one room in a mud house, almost empty except for an eight-spring iron bed, the floor so badly cemented that it weakens the brooms used for sweeping it (*Violence* 1). Adisa has to stoop very low in order to sweep, a symbol of the depth of dehumanisation of the working class, and an allusion to the sacrificial exchange of "her jewel", her sexual integrity, for money, which emerges later in the narrative as an important motif. Furthermore, Iyayi graphically foregrounds spatio-material distinction by contrasting Idemudia's poverty with Obofun's affluence, depicted by the latter's room of "polished floor", white painted walls, and high ceiling "where the air-conditioner softly blew cold air into the room" (*Violence* 123). Iyayi provides an extended description of the physical and material lack that Idemudia and his wife experience to expose a section of the societal divide replete with constraints on individual action and identity. Idemudia's work is ordered by the chiming of an outside clock to which he has to listen "*intently*", and Adisa has no choice but to "*stoop substantially* to sweep clean" (*Violence* 1). Their material space and conversations depict hunger and deprivation of the necessities of life and the effect of this lack on family stability. Idemudia wonders what else he has not done. His question is justified as the text narrates his offloading of Queen's three trailer loads of cement in the rain for a meagre wage, the resultant life-threatening sickness that takes him to the hospital, his return to hard labour after leaving the hospital, and the sale of his blood for money (*Violence* 156-157).

Iyayi extends the description of lack beyond the confines of Idemudia's room. He demonstrates the complexities of poverty, compounded by weather conditions.

Two days before, two houses had collapsed on the street. A small child had been trapped in one of the buildings under the fallen mud walls. Fortunately, rescuers, including Idemudia, had dug the child out in time. For the people who lived in the mud

houses on Owode Street, there was now another major preoccupation: which house would be the next to fall. (*Violence* 1/2)

Iyayi's descriptive and graphic language exposes the material and symbolic nature of social categories. The lower classes are trapped in a deplorable state where nature becomes a hindrance to their will to survive, since it prevents them from going out to look for work: "even one glance outside killed [Idemudia's] desire to go out. The whole street was immersed in flood" (*Violence* 13). The nudge of this space of deprivation, where Idemudia is both a victim and a rescuer, initiates a need to cross the class border. His need persuades him to act and to search for a better life; the life on the other side of the border. He goes out every day from this space of penury to Iyaro and First East Circular, a public extension of his private space where he, as well as other labourers, queues to be employed or bargains to sell his blood for fifteen cents. His employment is two-fold: his labour and his blood, his physical ability and his physiological resources. His survival, therefore, implicates dual border crossings: spatial and corporeal, both of which will be discussed in more detail in my analysis of trans-boundary or interclass relationships.

In terms of intra-class interaction, Adisa is presented as the voice, the constant nudge that brings class consciousness into the reality of the inhabitants. Her emaciated body, which Adélékè Adéèko aptly reads as evidence of class affiliation ("Plotting Class Consciousness" 180), is a physical sign of the depreciating nature of the lower-class territory. Her vocal nature and physique connote an irresistible call to action. Her complaint to Idemudia about is explicitly visible on her body, and metaphorically visible in her struggle to keep the house in order despite the withered broom. Iyayi strategically presents a space where the diminishing values of the people and things (Adisa, the broom, the rain, the shrieking eight-spring bed, the collapsing houses) correspond with the deplorable nature of the life of the working class he portrays. For Adéèko, all these are "factors of economic relations [a] metaphor for class affiliation" ("Plotting Class Consciousness" 180). In other words, lack and surplus are the defining functions of the opposing territories.

Another level of intra-class interaction exposes Obofun and Queen and the upper-class excesses occupying a socio-economic territory that contrasts to that of Idemudia and Adisa's. They are wealthy and influential. They are symbols of the life desired by the lower class. Queen is the antithesis of Adisa, who struggles with Idemudia without any hope of food. Queen already "owned two modern storey buildings in New Benin; one of the houses she lets out to the University at nine thousand naira a year and the University had paid rent for two years in

advance” (*Violence* 23). Her numerous extra-marital affairs with politicians are a bid to sustain delivery of free goods for her new motel and to keep her contracts. However, while uncertainty and deprivation trouble the territorial space of the lower class, infidelity and corruption characterise that of the elites. A typical conversation between Obofun and Queen portrays both their affluence and disturbed space. In one of the scenes, Queen comes to the hotel to show her husband an ultimatum from the government that threatens to terminate her building contract, only to find that he is in the chalet with another woman. She later accuses her husband:

‘Somebody saw you enter the reserved chalet with a woman [Adisa],’ ...

‘So you were in there,’ Queen accused him.

‘Stop it,’ he cried. ‘I never ask you what happens to you. Do I?’

Queen stood up. ‘You do not ask because you do not care.’

‘And why should I care?’ Obofun asked. ‘Anyway, let’s stop it. There’s nothing we can do about it. Besides we have already agreed ...’ (*Violence* 190)

A few paragraphs after this exchange she makes her disdain for her husband clear,

‘Well, go ahead and say it,’ she demanded, little flames dancing in her eyes. ‘I have slept with your friends! I have enjoyed myself as much as you have. And whose fault is it? I should have sat here, shouldn’t I, washing your pants after you had soiled...’ (*Violence* 191)

Queen’s interaction with her husband in the enclosure of their physical space exposes social elites preoccupied not with poverty and hunger, but with marital infidelity and abuse. They are internally divided and ravaged by familial problems. This is what Niyi Akingbe and Christopher Ogunyemi term “instability and collapse of a family structure among the elite, in which a wife pursues economic freedom so as to create an individuality and a separate personhood” (“Confronting Inequity in Nigerian Social Milieu” 151). Comparing the interactions between Idemudia and his wife with those between Obofun and Queen, one reads deprivation and the will to survive in the former, and affluence and corruption in the latter. While Adisa is the undaunted voice and presence urging Idemudia to a ceaseless struggle against social subjugation, Queen is an equal competitor with the husband in the struggle to maintain the status quo at the expense of morality. However, both connote struggle for survival at different planes.

The conversations in the individual intra-class units reveal the rate at which bodies are compromised in these social spaces. When Adisa threatened Idemudia with the decision to cross the boundary at the expense of her sexual integrity, Idemudia's reaction was a threat to kill her if she dared give her body in exchange for money (*Violence* 16). In contrast, Obofun and Queen enter a contract of tolerance of each other's sexual excesses (*Violence* 190). Their agreement gears towards maintaining social relevance in a society that codes social difference on achievement and influence. Thus, they compromise their integrity with the political elites on whom they depend for contracts in order to remain socially significant. Empowered by their wealth, they determine the extent of class border permeability and require a similar compromise from the working class who depend on them for sustenance.

Iyayi further interrogates social relations at the points of interaction between the elites and the lower class – the interclass interaction. Beyond material correspondence (the social elites in big mansions and the hotels; the lower class in the city slums), Iyayi exposes the details of class bordering at the points where these material spaces become distinct domains of violence. He relates the public and private places such as the streets, the Ring road, the Iyaro Park, the First East Circular junction, the hospitals, the chalets, the hotels, and the bedrooms as theatres of socio-economic exploitation and physical and psychological exchanges for survival. These public and private places are theatres where class bordering is violently performed, and where border crossing is enacted and controlled.

Socio-Economic Violence and Border Control

Social categories are interactive in nature. Individuals in different territories, physical and cultural, are either mutually or parasitically dependent. Where the border exists, “there is always someone who wants to cross it [in order] to get to the other side”, hence the existence of checks and controls at the border (Newman, “Borders and Bordering” 178). Describing the physical or symbolic area of contact as a transition zone, Newman asserts that, although the borders that exist between social groups are not as impermeable as those between nations and states, both types of borders present similar modes of trans-boundary interactions and control (“On Borders and Power” 18). For him, border control (or management) involves measures of easing or restricting movement between territories. This section takes a deeper consideration of interclass exchange. It analyses acts of exploitation and sexual violence as systemic tools for border management. Interclass contacts in this novel occur at the points of need for the

other. In the text, physical, financial, and sexual needs are the bases for the contacts between the borders.

For instance, Queen needs labourers to off-load her three trailer loads of cement before the rain destroys them. She goes to the street and hires Idemudia and three of his friends. Conditioned also by the basic need for food and the constant reminder to struggle against categorisation, Idemudia and his friends accept work at a meagre wage and to the detriment of their health. At this point of contact between the two territories, a sense of psychological violence is obvious in Queen's act of taking advantage of the desperate condition of her workers. Giving them an opportunity for better payment promises an enrichment of the working class and their eventual crossing into the elite territory, so she prefers to underpay them, an act that foregrounds violent border control which ensures restricted movement between the social classes. The relationship is therefore exploitative and parasitic in nature as she preys on the desperation and vulnerability of Idemudia and his like. Queen capitalises on the need, which forces the lower class out to the streets in search of survival opportunities. This explains her immediate engagement of Idemudia in another underpaid job after his return from the hospital, knowing that he cannot resist going out to the parks in search of work.

By narratively constructing interclass interaction, Iyayi makes possible the imagination of social locations and the ways they function. Typical of fiction, the text explores problems of difference by animating the concept of difference in ways conventional historic documents cannot. It transforms abstract ideas of difference into an imaginative and more accessible form. In this way, fiction brings us closer to the complexities and difficulties of social difference that may ordinarily be beyond our individual experience. According to Sarah Chan in her study of the role of fiction in medical ethics, works of fiction enable a personalisation of ethical problems "that fall outside our experience: either outside our immediate personal experience ... or outside the limits of our common experience" thereby "stretch[ing] the boundaries of our ethical imagination" (399). We can say that fiction enables the reader an epistemological border crossing into territories that would have remained only abstract. In *Violence* we encounter a physical and symbolic movement of characters, conditioned and propelled by need, along the spectrum of social territories, from the privileged to the underprivileged and vice versa.

The physical movement from inside the room to the streets and to the park is symbolic. While it extends the plot of the narrative, it implies a border crossing from the private to the public. It is an extension of the private; an encounter with the public where the social divide is represented because it is in this transition zone that each class interacts according to their status.

In front of the houses along the street, people sat and watched the weather. Men and women, all jobless, sat on the long wooden benches, their backs against the rough mud walls... Most of the people who walked along the streets were barefooted and as cars passed, some of them in Mercedes Benz cars, they splashed the red muddy water on the people but drove on, carelessly, secure inside. (*Violence* 69)

The lower class is represented in the streets as jobless, loitering, uncomfortable, and barefooted – typical of societal underdogs. The upper class are privileged and separated. They are symbolically bordered off from the “other” by the walls of their Mercedes Benz, as they engage the services of the working class from within the car. Thus, an interclass interaction in the public place exposes an unequal relationship. With particular reference to the prevalence of car in the city space of Johannesburg, Megan Jones asserts that the car embodies power and difference. The car, she argues, underscores “both the acute economic discrepancies persisting in Johannesburg and the ways in which the boundaries constructed between the spaces of wealth and poverty are perforated” (Jones, “Cars, Capital and Disorder” 383). Jones’ reading could relate to the figure of the Mercedes Benz cars in the socio-economically unequal society that Iyayi challenges. The car as a bordered and exclusive space depicts the dissimilar level at which the classes physically encounter themselves in the public space. Unlike the lower class, the social elites are secure inside their cars.

Another public space of class interaction is the hospital, which Iyayi describes as “a market of patients” (*Violence* 56). Here, though the characters also seem to be levelled by ill health, the provisions made for the patients are categorised. For instance, when Idemudia breaks down after offloading three trailer loads of cement for Queen under unhealthy labour conditions, he is denied admission to the ward reserved for the elites.

‘We have no beds here either,’ he [the doctor] complained.

‘Why, he can share a bed or sleep on the floor,’ the nurse suggested. (59)

‘Too many people are already sharing the beds or sleeping on the floor.’

‘What then do we do?’

‘The Senior Service Ward is *almost empty*.’ [the doctor said]

‘But you can’t send him there,’ the nurse said sharply. (*Violence* 60, my emphasis)

The narrator’s emphasis on the health condition of the poor masses in this space contrasts with the narrative silence on that of the upper class in the same space, suggesting a difference. The

poor patients are “haggard and distraught faces everywhere. Worry had eaten deep into the faces of the majority of them. Wrinkles and cracks were in abundance” (*Violence* 82), but nothing is said about the frail elites. However, what Iyayi achieves by bringing the classes within the same space of frailty is to show the commonality of being human and weak. This commonality is subverted through the codification and social localisation of the hospital spaces by the system, managed and controlled by the elites. In the hospital space, while special wards are designated for the wealthy, the lower class share beds in general wards. Where there are no more beds to share, they take a place on the floor – exposing not only a separation from “special” spaces but the lowest form of dehumanisation. Idemudia’s rejection from the reserved elites’ wards questions the state’s prioritisation of individual status above common humanity and common heritage as citizens.

Iyayi also presents the node of interclass encounter using the metaphor of wrestling. Referring to the haggard faces of the poor patients, the narrator states “it was evident that these were people [the poor patients] who had been engaged by life in a terrible and fierce struggle and that they had come out of each bout worse and still more badly battered” (*Violence* 56). He deploys a similar metaphor of wrestling and battery in Papa Jimoh’s police experience, when he is unjustly arrested for a lost key in the company where he works as a driver. Subjected to inhumane treatment in the prison for two days, he comes out with his “human pride flat[tened] out, knocked down by this cruel bout with *other* human beings” (*Violence* 82, my emphasis). By this, Iyayi presents socio-economic boundaries as conflict zones and interclass interaction as contested. By “cruel bout with [the] other”, he suggests an existential struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor. The idea of a cruel bout with reference to socio-economic class struggle echoes the first generation’s cultural and ethnic border conflict discussed in the previous chapter. Okonkwo’s wrestling with Amalinze formed the background for the social struggle that is narrated in *Things Fall Apart*, which is replicated in Okonkwo’s fallout with the colonialist. Okonkwo’s and Biafra’s conflicts with the new colonial culture and with Nigeria respectively are historical moments of border struggle that leave the weak territory badly battered and, in the case of the latter (Biafra), nominally erased.

In *Violence*, the city presents sites of amalgamation and individualisation. Here, Walter Mignolo’s (2000) and Newman’s (2003) ideas about the existential conditions of migrants as liminal beings are applicable to Idemudia and the rest of his class, who are at the economic threshold of society. Mignolo describes the migrants as “always dwelling in the borders, whether they reside in the heart of Paris, Berlin, London, New York, or Los Angeles” (*Local*

Histories/Global Designs xv). They are at the borders because they are denied access to social amenities and comfort. For Newman, stricter border management restricts migrants' access to basic rights "regardless of place of their location in geographical space which may, as is often the case, be in the very heart of the capital city" ("Boundaries" 132). Idemudia's migration from the villages to the city, occasioned by the animosity that exists between him and his father, and his search for a financially enabling opportunity to take care of his divorced mother and siblings, is an economic migrancy that lacks resultant social transformation. Despite his physical positionality within the larger space of the city he remains at the margin, exploited by the upper class whose affluence is socially and spatially signified.

Beyond human interaction, the city's topographical network – the connection between Owode Street, Ekanwam Road, and the Ring Road at the centre of the city – evokes a sense of hierarchy and an inevitable trans-boundary interaction. The narrator describes that both Owode Street and Ekanwan Road lead to New Benin, the centre of the city, and that these roads intersect at the Ring Road. The busyness of the junction is such that human traffic halts the flow of movement and subjects people to a state of confusion. Hence, the narrator explains how both the rich and the poor navigate the Ring Road with similar feelings of pressure. The Ring Road is symbolic of an inescapable chain of interaction between the classes. Adisa "circled the Ring Road along the stalls of the market which flowed with people and red water" (*Violence* 85). Iriso, a supervisor in the Ministry of Agriculture, and Queen also navigate the Ring Road with the same feeling of pressure. The Ring Road merges predators and their prey but in a performed hierarchy: the latter drive in exotic cars; the former walk and work under the scorching weather. The crowd described as an uncontrollable "human flood" (*Violence* 85) metaphorically evokes the image of the overcrowded cities of Nigeria in the second generation. The Ring Road is also a metaphorical class leveller, where the privileges of the social classes are subsumed into the reality of a postcolonial society. It is a node and a point of intersection that suggests borderlessness in the intermingling of classes. However, though the road may be read as a site of class convergence, one still acknowledges the limits of existence since the lower class enter this spatial (and symbolic) territory with little or no agency. These limits are already symbolically presupposed in the means of entering this public space: the rich in their cars and the poor walking through the muddy road pushing their trucks. Nevertheless, this topographical network and its enactment of compulsory interaction is Iyayi's way of signalling the need for border inclusivity.

Interclass interaction also involves an intimate dimension communicated, among others, in sexual and corporeal violence. Sexual and corporeal violence in the text reveal a physical and symbolic border crossing from the public to the private. There is a crossing from the streets to the bedroom or chalets, and symbolically from the exploitation of labour force to that of the body. In the public, borders are fundamentally collective: they constitute an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ binary. But in the private, the border is more individualised than collective. Even though the individual is part of the class he/she represents, in the instance of sexual abuse, class differentiation is etched onto individual bodies and memories. Sexual abuse is embodied personally. Obofun and Queen, in their respective bids to violate Adisa and Idemudia, call them from the “there” of the latter’s poverty to the “here” of the former’s place of affluence. Here class bordering is performed on the material space: a movement from the mud house and the littered streets to the mansion. This physical border crossing from the streets to the mansion/bedroom exemplifies power. By entrapping the lower class in their space, the upper class achieves a massaging of their ego and an assertion of power. In addition, in this spatial movement, they play on the psyche of the vulnerable through an exposure to affluence that serves the purpose of enticing bait and a perpetuation of alterity. Spatial border crossing into the privacy of the upper class’ bedrooms and enticement by the affluence of the material space tests the resistance of poor characters.

When Obofun deceives Adisa and takes her to his room, he entices her with the “flagrant display of wealth” in the room, thereby subjecting Adisa to an internalisation of socio-economic inequality. She thinks: “so one man could live so well while others like her starved to death” (*Violence* 168). Obofun opens the wardrobe, exposing goods he intends Adisa to sell, knowing her need for money for her husband’s hospital bill. The economic contrast between Obofun and Adisa is what Iyayi defines as violence. It is typical instance of his argument in the opening quote of this chapter that condemns a system that intensifies the difference between the poor and the rich where the former “has more than enough to feed himself, his dogs, cats, children and monkeys” and the latter is “weak and thin from hunger” (186). But in this case, Adisa rejection of Obofun’s offer is met by violence. He will not take no for an answer and so forces himself on her. He “weighed down heavily on her and her fight was nothing but the last spasmodic movement of a dying animal ... and her body was tense but cold and her eyes were vacant, as if she was not here” (*Violence* 169-170).

Though deprivation weakens Adisa’s resolve to totally resist, she nonetheless struggles against Obofun’s advances. Her struggle symbolises a constant bottom-up pressure and challenge of

the border. Such challenges emanating from the ordinary people living at the margin is explained by Newman as external “bottom-up” pressure on state border control (“On Borders and Power” 15). On another note, such resistance and rebellion attract violent and ruthless retribution from those in power. Hence, Adisa’s resistance results in a violent and transgressive crossing through her corporeal border by Obofun. Her rape is an act of violence that is economically empowered. It is an objectification that ensures class border maintenance; a top-down resistance to border crossing. Her sexual violation, even though in exchange for money, is not an invitation into affluence but a reinscription on her the need to continuously trade her body for her survival. Her rape is a reiteration of lower-class dependency and hence a maintenance of class border.

Similarly, to Obofun’s sexual violence, Queen’s failed seduction of Idemudia is an interclass interaction that also discloses sexual violence aimed at achieving subjugation. Threatened by her labourers (of whom Idemudia is the foreman) who have decided to go on strike unless she increases their wages, Queen desires to maintain the power dynamic through Idemudia. She invites and takes Idemudia into her bedroom and offers him money and sex. However, interclass interaction between Queen and Idemudia exposes a non-compromised border. Unlike Adisa’s internalisation and consideration of economic injustice, Idemudia negotiates his identity in relation to moral values. He weighs a symbolic border crossing into affluence at the cost of his integrity. He decides not to compromise borders and rejects Queen's offer of money and sex for financial satisfaction and group sabotage. His resistance epitomises Iyayi’s exposition of the revolutionary spirit of the working class that defies being broken by poverty and oppression. Feeling her power challenged, Queen retaliates by exposing Adisa’s infidelity to him.

At first, Idemudia is terribly hurt by the discovery that Adisa slept with Obofun. He rushes back to confront his wife. But when he enters the room where Adisa is fast asleep, he is restrained by her fragility. Looking at Adisa, he sees a victim of class border violence, and he understands the reason for her compromised bordering – her giving up to Obofun in exchange for N100 and bottles of whiskey to sell. This flash of understanding is an epistemological border crossing; a movement into awareness. He moves from a lack of knowledge as to why Adisa has compromised the border, to the acknowledgement that she has made the sacrifice for him. He realises that all the poor are victims of one form of corporeal compromise or another: he has compromised the border of his body by selling his blood for money, Adisa has slept with Obofun, and Adisa’s aunt lives as a prostitute in the city in order to take care of her

children (*Violence* 46). He realises that many of them continue in the same pattern of living, allowing various forms of crossings, especially through the wall of the body, in order to survive socio-economic pressures and violence.

The crossing of borders – the breaking of the corporeal territories by the needle which pierced Idemudia’s body as he sold his blood for money (*Violence* 156), the forceful rape of Adisa by Obofun, and the piercing of Iyese’s female genitals by Isa Pallat in *Arrows of Rain* (*Arrows* 166) – figuratively and literally evokes dominance and a forced border crossing. Though their bodies belong to them, they seem not to have power over their corporeality due to societal forces resulting from intra-class pressures and interclass attrition. For Newman, these forces are consequences of “internal pressures of change, or externally imposed processes of institutional exclusion” (“On Borders and Power” 19). Violence against the bodies of the vulnerable leave them with the feeling of defeat as social victims, and at other times deprives them of their voice. The narrator captures Idemudia’s deflated spirit at the sale of his blood in these words:

Momentarily, he had shut his eyes and shivered from the sudden pain when the woman broke the surface of his skin with the sharp end of the big needle before plunging further into his vein ... and each time after he had sold his blood, he had returned home, subdued and for a reason he could not understand, ashamed. (*Violence* 156-157)

A similar sense of loss befalls Adisa at the point of Obofun’s penetration:

She gritted her teeth and her body was tensed but cold and her eyes were vacant as if she was not here but far, far away... [she] had been impassive, [Obofun] had felt at one stage as if he was making love to a dead woman. (*Violence* 170)

Exploitation, rape, sexual blackmail, denial of voice, and other societal conditions that subjugate the poor to sell their blood or to compromise the border embody structural violence geared towards social-border management. In Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, violence is initiated by the violent, “those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognise others as people – not by those who are oppressed, exploited and unrecognised” (32). Freire believes that the initiator of terror is not the violated “but the violent, who with their power create the concrete situation which begets the rejects of life” (32). Queen, Obofun, and the other elites exert power that subjects Idemudia, Adisa, and the other poor to the status of perpetual “rejects of life”, and forms in the psyche of the poor an inescapable prison that either awakens the revolutionary spirit to break off from social imprisonment or keeps the victim in

a perpetual exchange of the body for survival. For Idemudia, a revolutionary spirit is awakened when, finally, he leads the labourers on the strike against Queen and the inhumanity of class border which she symbolises. In other texts, such as Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*, a different form of revolution is performed in response to structures of oppression. *Arrows of Rains* narrates a class border that is politically based and violence which is directed at the masses, as will be engaged in the next section of this chapter.

Transcending Borders: Voice and Agency in Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*

Okey Ndibe's experience as a journalist and a political columnist in two privately owned Nigerian newspapers informs the plot structure of his debut novel *Arrows of Rain*, published twelve years after his departure to live in America after being invited by Chinua Achebe to become the founding editor of *African Commentary* (Ndibe, *Never Look an American in the Eye* 24). His Nigerian newspaper columns and his novel are criticisms of Nigeria's irresponsible government, reflecting his position as a literary activist. Ndibe's other novel, *Foreign Gods, Inc.* (2014), mediates the racial encounters of Nigerian migrants in America. His memoir, *Never Look an American in the Eye* (2016), exposes similar racial bent from personal experience of migrancy in America over almost three decades.

Arrows of Rain is an evocative work of intense political and emotional concern set in a fictitious locale – Langa city in the nation of Madia. In not situating the story in a recognisable locale, it differs from Iyayi's *Violence*, which is set in a recognisable Nigerian city and places such as Benin, Iyaro Park, and Ring Road. Ndibe's fictitious locale achieves a distancing from reality in order to communicate a sensitive message, considering the tension of military dictatorship and heightened media/narrative censorship prevalent in his time of writing – the latter part of the second generation. Notwithstanding the creation of a world which by name defamiliarises the normal, near similarity of the fictitious names to historical places – B. Beach/Bar Beach; Langa/Lagos; Madia/Nigeria – exposes the satirical import of the text (Nnodim 2008:321, 331; Raji 2005:144). Moreover, a deeper interpretation of the story brings to bear the text's active engagement with socio-political difference and ridiculing of political oppression and violence in Nigeria's post-civil war era. Furthermore, employing fictitious scenes and names engages the reader more closely by bringing him/her to close reading for personal decoding of meaning. Through this engagement the reader becomes an independent judge of the actual situation, which the author indirectly presents and satirises.

Ndibe, however, does not completely defamiliarise the world in his story. As a literary activist, he fearlessly gives clue to the social issues he condemns by making apparent reference to actual historical actors and dates. Except for the names of the major settings and the names of the characters, there are many historical coincidences in the novel that reveal the the novel's insistence on the reality of the time. For instance, he categorically states that the fictive country's independence was gained in 1960. Although 17 African countries gained independence in 1960, it is still a coincidence with Nigeria's date of independence. Moreover, to describe the ruthlessness of colonialism at the hands of Britain and the joys of gaining independence, the narrator uses the metaphor of birth, but from the dirty waters of the womb: "On 1 October 1960 our country had groped its way through the dark waters of the British womb and emerged into the world as a nation in its own right" (*Arrows* 80). His reference to Berlin and the Scramble for Africa, the extensive replication of the way Nigeria gained independence through the help of her intellectual elites, and the discovery of crude oil at the eve of the independence (*Arrows* 80-82) are instances of direct reference to historical realities. All these expose the author's desire to relate the truth of neo-colonialism and disillusionment of this era that widened socio-political and economic distinction among citizens. He claims:

[t]he nation we inherited from the English was placed in the hands of politicians who sucked its blood until it became dry and anaemic. Overnight cabinet ministers puffed out protruding bellies they themselves called PP, for Power Paunch. What was left of Madia's swagger was a mere mask for impotence. (*Arrows* 81)

The ability to straddle fictive and real worlds gives Ndibe's novel its particularity and force against social injustice.

In *Arrows of Rain*, Ndibe presents power dynamics and political domination from the personal experience of two central characters, Femi Adero and Bukuru. Bukuru's story, presented as a letter, is framed by the overarching story of Femi, a journalist with the *Daily Chronicle*. Femi recounts a reporting duty that takes him to the B. Beach on January 1, 1998, to interview people about the military Head of State's New Year proclamation of his life presidency. At the beach, instead of the interview, a dead prostitute's body becomes the centre of attraction. There, the detectives who come to investigate the crime arrest a supposed "madman" by the name of Bukuru (whose original name is later revealed as Ogugua) for openly attesting to the fact that the military are the perpetrators of the prevalent incidences of rape and murder of prostitutes at the beach. Later at the court session, Bukuru also accuses the Head of State, General Isa Palat Bello, of raping and murdering a prostitute by the name of Iyese twenty years ago. This

public accusation sets the stage for Bukuru's imprisonment and plans for his execution. In prison, Bukuru reads Femi's publication of a more objective version of his arrest and therefore requests to see him. With the collaboration of the empathetic psychiatrist, Dr S. P. J. C. Mandi, assigned by the state to interrogate Bukuru and declare him insane, his request is granted. Femi disguises himself as Dr A. F. Tijani and goes with Dr Mandi into the prison, where he accepts Bukuru's request to be the voice to his long-muted life story written as a form of letter.

In the letter, Bukuru narrates his life as a journalist twenty years ago. He recounts his emotional involvement with a prostitute, Iyese, at the time she decides to free herself from Isa Palat Bello's sexual grip and assaults. Iyese has fled a failed marriage with Dr Maximus Jaja and has come to Langa city, where she takes up prostitution for a living under a disguised name "Emilia". She becomes entangled with Bello (then a major in the army), who constantly and brutally rapes her, and finally murders her when she refuses him paternity of the son she begets with Bukuru. Iyese's brutal rape and death causes tumultuous fear in Bukuru and makes him distance himself from Iyese for fear of Bello's attack. Out of fear, Bukuru also discards Iyese's story after recording and promising to publish it. When Bello becomes the president of Madia following the military coup that dethrones the corrupt Prime Minister Askia Amin, Bukuru escapes to the B. Beach, threatened by the president and having missed the opportunity to tell Iyese's story when it has the capacity of incriminating Bello and subsequently preventing his becoming the president.

The narration returns to Femi, who connects his life as an adopted orphan to Bukuru's story, and eventually discovers from his adoptive parents that his own real name is Ogugua, his mother's name is Iyese, and that Bukuru is likely his father. He goes back to the prison after reading Bukuru's story and demands confirmation of his paternity from him. Bukuru is overwhelmed by this revelation and the intertwining of their fates. He is also burdened by the state's plan to have him silenced and exterminated. Overcome by these pressures of Femi's revelation and Bello's determination to silence him for bringing his (Bello's) past to the public space, he commits suicide in prison.

Arrows of Rain has received several literary criticisms, centred on its appeal as a satirical and allegorical realist novel. Niyi Akingbe discusses Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* as a direct engagement with the evils of the birth of military rule in Nigeria, appraising the novel as "an assault against the military and an indictment of their dubious preoccupation with nation-building" (162). He portrays the characters, especially the protagonists Bukuru and Femi Adero, as both disconnected from and tied to their past in acts of silence and remembering.

Akingbe justifies the place and import of the remembering of the past which cost a dismembering of the present in Femi and Bukuru. He considers the author, just like the remembering by the protagonist, to be a dissenting voice against the “institutionalised and systematic extermination” of justice (162). Akingbe’s idea of injustice as institutionalised and systematised connects to the present chapter’s engagement of social difference as a consciously created and systematically managed border. It points to the place of power wielded by the elites, social and political, in the perpetration of class distinctions in society.

Wumi Raji reads the text as a continuation of Achebe’s *Anthills of the Savannah* in its “preoccupation with the political and economic identities of the country” (“Identity and Narrativity” 144). For Raji, the novel is a fulfilment of Achebe’s prediction of total military invasion of the political landscape of the nation. He reads the choice of characters from different ethnic groups, such as Ogugua (Igbo), Bello (Hausa), Adero (Yoruba), and Iyese (Urhobo) as symbolic of the fusion of the ethnic groups in what would become the Nigerian nation. He therefore concludes that the text questions the fate of the nation as an offspring of ethnic amalgamation, and he proffers a radical solution for national unity, which consists of opening the national borders for free exit and inclusion of the ethnic groups. Raji, therefore, considers *Arrows of Rain* to be Ndibe’s contribution to the debate on Nigeria’s sustainability as one nation. This present study goes beyond considering the dynamics of individual identities in relation to ethnic amalgamation. It examines characters’ positionalities within the perpetrator/victim, privileged/underprivileged, military/civilian, and government/citizen binaries. It also interrogates the power that plays out at the point, the borderlands, where these binaries intersect, and thus argues that a critical way of transcending socio-political borders is through the agency of the voice and radical exposure of inequalities.

Delineating Borders

Arrows of Rain (*Arrows*) opens with the graphic image of the dead body of the young prostitute raped at the B. Beach on a New Year day, “too stark” (*Arrows* 3) to behold. This scene sets the stage for interclass interaction which exposes the disparity between the political elites and the masses. With the dead body and the people gathered around the pitiable sight, three detectives (representatives of the state) arrive. The detectives are initially presented as dutiful. The leader “[w]ithout interrupting his writing ... shouted orders at the other two detectives. They ran hither and thither, now clicking their cameras, now throwing tapes down to take measurement. The crowd observed these rituals from a safe distance” (*Arrows* 11). The semiotic markers of

responsibility – to interview, scribble, run hither and thither, click cameras, throw tapes to measure – seem to portray duty and state concern. But the narrator immediately exposes the irony of this frantic effort by counting the death as one of many, “another unsolved death assigned a bureaucratic number and filed away somewhere, to gather dust, soon forgotten” (*Arrows* 11).

Instantly discarding any hope of solving the mystery of the deaths is Ndibe’s satirical way of completely disassociating the motives of the actions of the state from the action itself. It is typical of what Rick Eden calls the meiotic nature of satire, in which “it supplies an unexpectedly diminished perspective on the antagonist” (593). According to Eden, satire “accuses its antagonists of imposture, conscious or unconscious, duplicitous or deluded. ... [it] strips actions of any worthwhile purposes, denies the possibility of genuine engagement, and implies that they are calculated only to impress others” (593). By referring to the rape as “one of many”, filed away and forgotten, Ndibe strips the detectives’ action of its pretence. He calls attention to the incessancy of rape and political violence. Satirically, Ndibe exposes the reality of his elite characters beyond what they appear to be. He criticises the irresponsibility of the government, which criminalises prostitution in order to empower itself to appropriate and objectify prostitutes. Ndibe’s criticism of the government represented by its part (the detectives and the military) is a form of satiric synecdoche.

Eden also notes that “synecdoche is the basis of all generalizing and stereotyping for satire” (590). Synecdoche implies a “systemic relationship” realised by the representation of a class by its member(s). Besides ethnic complexity and what Kyallo Wadi Wamitila calls “social contextuality of naming” (37) which in the case of *Arrows of Rain* is revealed by the names of the major characters, the detectives’ names – John Lati (Yoruba), Douglas Okoro (Igbo), and Abdul Musa (Hausa) – present an encoded reference to the state, a pointer to what Ndibe does with the names of his characters, which I will engage later in my analysis. This representation is confirmed by the detectives’ claim as they interview Bukuru; they address themselves as “officers of the state ... [and working] in the name of the state” (*Arrows* 12), thereby indicating at the surface level (their office) and at the deeper level (their names) their allegiance to a side of the border. Substituting the state with the detectives or the military in a satiric synecdoche personifies the political elites as a class. It brings the reader closer to the author’s object of criticism. In the detectives, the military, the court, and the presidents, Ndibe presents holistic weaponisation of difference against ordinary and vulnerable citizens.

Consequently, Bukuru's confrontation with the detectives and his accusation of the military of rape is a confrontation with the state. His confrontation is an effort to challenge and transcend the hegemonic border and to reclaim agency against it. It is a bottom-up pressure that has the possibility of affecting border change. His accusation enacts a moment of recognition both in the detectives and against himself. It is a moment in the text that involves an epistemological bordering at different levels: the detectives recognise themselves in the accused perpetrators and they also recognise a threat to hegemonic security in Bukuru. Placing this scene within Achille Mbembe's idea of necropolitics, which is the "ultimate expression of sovereignty" to decide who lives and who dies, one then understands the action of the detectives at the moment of this recognition. They see Bukuru as "an attempt on [their] life, as a mortal threat or absolute danger whose biophysical elimination would strengthen [their] potential to life and security" (Mbembe "Necropolitics" 18) and so the only alternative is to eliminate him. Therefore, the detectives expedite arrest and whisk Bukuru out of the crowd, initiating a process of silencing. The narration moves from exposition of the state's negligence to its tactful destruction of both the voice and the person of the populace, portraying a nation in an era of social decay where the state is pitted against the citizens.

Besides the border implication of the first scene, *Arrows of Rain* calls for an analysis of the material space of the border dwellers. It involves paying attention to the spatial signifiers that define coded social difference, such as the bus which the narrator joins as he leaves the beach. Through the depiction of decay and the over-crowded space of the bus, the sweaty passengers, and the sales taking place within the bus, the author captures the condition of the masses.

[In the bus] a rowdy contest for the passengers' attention developed between a travelling medicine salesman and an itinerant preacher. The salesman's ware included an antibiotic dubbed 'No more sufferhead' made by 'India's medical wizards', able to cure 'bad spirit and witch-craft, eczema, crawcraw, gonorrhea, syphilis, AIDS, watery sperm and dead penis'. It sold briskly. (*Arrows* 13-14)

The condition of the bus reaffirms the class of the occupants as much as the phrase "it sold briskly", which foregrounds the state of the masses' health that makes them rush for a medication that cures all they suffer from. The bus and its occupants contrast with the privileged space of the politicians in their lavish party at the house of the Minister for Social Issues, Reuben Ata. The house is "large, high-ceilinged and brightly lit. A smell of food and cigar smoke filled the air. A band was playing blues ... a corner of the room where several cabinet ministers were seated ... The women sat on the ministers' laps or massaged their necks"

(*Arrows* 112-113). The two physical spaces semiotically mark the respective social conditions of the poor and the rich; the commoners and the political elite respectively. The commoners' struggle to buy antibiotics for limitless ailments challenges the material and sexual lavishness of the social and political elites.

As mentioned earlier, *Arrows of Rain*, names also have profound significance in delineating social status. Wamitila notes that "characters' names, besides individualising the characters, have important semantic, pragmatic, allusive and symbolic import that must be seen in the perspective of the overall structure of a particular work" (36). Ndibe's naming strategy is an important signifier that encapsulates social categorisation. It encodes the crucial thematic concern of the second-generation literary era. While he assigns full proper names to characters of state and political class, such as the president Isa Palat Bello, Prime Minister Asika Amin, Minister of Social Affairs Reuben Ata, and the judge Justice Kayode, he signifies the social conditions of the ordinary masses with single names and sometimes distorted identities, such as Lanky the lifeguard, Iyese and Violet the prostitutes, and Bukuru the madman. This technique gives an insight into the disparity in the presumed significance and status of the characters. Furthermore, some of the ordinary characters' names indicate a form of split identity, internal bordering, caused by prevailing social conditions. For instance, Bukuru, whose actual name is Ogugua, takes a disguise name "Bukuru" in order to escape the wrath of the dictatorial president. Iyese chooses the name Emilia to screen her real self from Bello and her sex clients.

The splitting of identity is a survival tactic in social conditions where the masses, especially women, are exploited by the upper class. Attesting to the significance of double naming as a sex worker, Iyese claims:

We [prostitutes] don't let them know our real names, when we have sex with them we don't let them touch our real bodies. A prostitute carries two spirits within her. With one she lives a normal life. A false name keeps our two spirits apart. If we didn't keep them separate, we might go mad.

Take me, for instance. My real name is Iyese. The name connects me to the spot where I was born. With it I smile my true smiles ... and shed my real tears. It's the name with which I sigh at life.

As for Emilia, it's like a label on a loaf of bread. It is the name that takes the rapes of my body so that Iyese may go unhurt. (*Arrows* 132-133)

As a traditional name, “Iyese” is socially contextual. It connotes connection to the tradition and culture of a particular ethnic group, the Urhobo. But “Emilia” is a Western name belonging to no one, and is situated outside Iyese’s sense of self. Because of its anonymity, the name “Emilia” corresponds to the social space where it is adopted. Iyese’s change of name is synonymous with her escape to the city. Her movement between two names enables instability and symbolic crossings between accountability and anonymity, associated with the village and the city respectively. As “Iyese” she is charged with the responsibility of conforming to the demands of “the spot where she is born” (*Arrows* 144), echoed in her grandmother’s reminder that she is a child of her womb and that “a wise child listens to the voice of her parents” (*Arrows* 144). But as “Emilia” she assumes a prostitute’s identity, and blinds her sense of responsibility in order to survive the pressures of institutional exclusion in the city. The same applies to Bukuru, whose life in the city is explained by his grandmother as a distancing from the language of his hearth (*Arrows* 89). As Bukuru returns to the village to mourn his father, he marvels again at his blind grandmother’s exceptional wisdom and ability to recognise him before he speaks. She tells him: “You don’t understand because you have travelled too far from your hearth. You know what a big place the world is, but you have forgotten the language of your soil” (*Arrows* 89).

The city enables an anonymous existence different from the sense of accountability that the characters experience in the village. Like Idemudia in Iyayi’s *Violence*, border crossing into the city exposes one to stark economic and political inequality and an inescapable chain of class interactions. The movement of these characters to the city initiates a diffusion of identities and sometimes an outright identity change as they encounter other characters. Divorced from Dr Maximus, Iyese makes the “impulsive decision” to “head, not in the direction of the village ... but towards Langa, a city ... she had heard was a vast, strange human bazaar where shame had no odour because people lived anonymously” (*Arrows* 157). The competitive and anonymous nature of the city, therefore, places characters’ identities, especially those of the lower class, under pressure. The system, controlled by the elites, enforces a check on the masses that spatially, psychologically, and morally affects the individual and results in the erasure of his/her identities. Most of the time class-border control is performed violently in order to suppress any form of transcending the border, either through radical exposure of inequalities and/or reclaiming the agency of the voice.

Interclass Interaction, Transgressed Bodies, and the Metaphor of Prostitution

Trans-boundary or interclass interaction reveals the nuances of city life, where negotiation of identity is complexly interdependent and personal. It is interdependent (parasitic or mutual) due to the need each has of the other, and is aided by the anonymous nature of the city space. As in Iyayi's *Violence*, characters in *Arrows of Rain* exist in the same space together but differently, and their differences correspond to social locations and needs. In *Violence*, public places such as the parks are locations of violent exchange. The elites exploitatively buy labour and blood produced by the existential needs of the lower class. In *Arrows of Rain*, a typical codification of social space plays out in spaces such as Minister Ata's party, a microcosm of the city space. First, admittance into the party is envisioned as privilege, hence the prostitutes' struggle to gain entrance, as well as the Minister's pride. Minister Ata confirms this struggle when he tells Bukuru: "Every girl in town wants to gatecrash my party.... [f]ive months ago one lady died outside my gate.' [His] face came alive with pride. 'Competition to get into Ata's party. This is the biggest party in town'" (*Arrows* 115). Furthermore, Bukuru's admittance into the privileged space of the party when he was a journalist is at the invitation of the Minister. His assisted trans-boundary crossing and interaction is an indirect strategy to silence his journalistic criticism of the government. Social codification at this party is embodied: bodies of both prostitutes and ministers commingle in intimacy at different physical and symbolic levels. Bukuru observes that in the party, "[m]ost of the men were stout and middle-aged, all the women young and lithe" (*Arrows* 112/113). And while introducing him to the party, Minister Ata tells him,

It's not easy being a minister ... Members of the cabinet gave me the mandate to throw parties. My colleagues come here to forget all the problems in their ministry. And to recharge their batteries ... The ambassadors you see here will never send home a negative report about Madia. I make sure of that by giving them the most beautiful girls. (*Arrows* 117)

The party reveals the corporeal aspects of interclass bordering and border crossing. The bodies intermingle at different physical and functional levels. Functionally, the prostitutes' bodies are tools for sexual gratification for the men (such is Adisa's body for Obofun in *Violence*). At the point where the borders of the skin meet there is an unequal balance of power and affection, symbolised by their physical difference. Hence, the men are the "us" and the prostitutes, whose bodies are transgressed, broken, and consumed for a purpose, are the "them". Even though the sense of gate-crashing to gain entrance into the party supposes free will on the part of the

prostitutes, their choices are conditioned by societal pressures; they are victims of “externally imposed processes of institutional exclusion” (Newman, “On Borders and Power” 19) that lead to the “impulsive decision” (*Arrows* 157) to compromise life. The prostitutes are both instrumentalised as battery chargers by the ministers and as sexual tools employed to achieve strategic and structural silencing of journalists and ambassadors.

One can therefore read this corporeal transgression as a weapon for border management on two levels – physical and symbolic. The prostitutes are victims of physical rape due to the brutal handling of their bodies by their clients and the military. They are also victims of symbolic rape, manifested in the social condition that compels them to change their names and mute their voices. At both levels rape achieves an exclusionary purpose – alienating the victim both from society and their interior selves. Iyese, for instance, is violently raped by Bello from the first day of her encounter with him, and he repeats the same any time she tries to break away from him. Many times he tells her that he likes it when a woman cries. Iyese recalls: “He raped me twice that [first] night He slapped me until my eyes saw lightning. Then he raped me. Laughing” (*Arrows* 160).

The military/prostitute relationship is a microcosm of the state/civil relationship controlled by political dictatorship. According to Ayo Olukotun, “Nigeria regressed to a form of military autocracy, which abandoned the consensual format of the military government of the 1970s and 1980s in favour of personalised military power marked by state violence” (317-318)²⁴. Violent military power is also evident in the incidence of the girl the military men caught in one of their prostitutes’ raids. When she protested that she is not a prostitute, they slapped her till she collapsed and one of them tells her, “if you are not a prostitute, that means you’re fresh meat. That’s the kind I like. I will make you a prostitute tonight” (*Arrows* 216). Military insolence and intolerance of civilian protest, therefore, typifies tyranny and the difficulty of border permeability, especially evident in the political landscape of post-civil war Nigeria after the military take-over of government.

Mbembe's argument on the instrumental value of the slave aptly explains life of Iyese and the other prostitutes in relation to the state apparatus that enslaves them. Mbembe describes the

²⁴ Military dictatorship in Nigeria intensified during the rule of General Sani Abacha as the military Head of State from 1993-1998. This period is marked by “the use for private purposes of the legitimate organs of state violence by those in authority and the function of such violence as an instrument in the service of their strategies of accumulation of wealth” (Olukotun 318). Within this period there were increased “detentions, manhunts, assassinations, arson attacks on newspaper houses and the mysterious disappearance of opposition figures” (Olukotun 317). Abacha’s regime was so dictatorial that many social and literary activists, such as Wole Soyinka, fled the country in self-exile.

slave as “an instrument of labor ... and a property” with a price. He goes on to elaborate that as a property the value of the slave is his/her usage and the need he/she satisfies. Hence, the life of the slave is that which is synonymous with pain, subjected to a “world of horrors and intense cruelty and profanity” and at the disposition of his cruel and intemperate owner (“Necropolitics” 21). In a similar sense, Iyese is a sexual slave to Bello. Her price and value may well be the sexual satisfaction she supplies so that her decision against such instrumentalisation calls into action a “cruel and intemperate” infliction of pain and death from Bello. Iyese protests and resolves to reclaim her voice and free herself from his slavery and control, having fallen in love with Bukuru intensifies Bello’s claim on her life. While Bukuru’s love affair with Iyese reinforces her resolution to extricate herself from the parasitic interclass relationship with Bello, it halts their (Bukuru and Iyese) interclass permeability. It brings about a reinforcement of difference by Bello. He becomes an obstacle to Iyese’s “struggle for a dignified existence in circumstances so dire and inhuman” (*Arrows* 165). Bello threatens Iyese:

I will kill you without consequence! I will show you that you’re nothing but a common filthy prostitute! Because I brought myself low to sleep with you, you open your dirty trap and tell me you’re not interested. I will show you who is who in this *city*! (*Arrows* 159 emphasis added)

Bello symbolises the state and the elites who decide the rate of border permeability and control the politics of economic and political classification. His threat typifies what Noel Parker and Nick Vaughan-Williams identify as “violent performativity of bordering practices designed to exclude, abandon, and/or kill the ‘Other’” (“Critical Border Studies” 731). Reasoning with Mbembe, the act of violent performance of belonging and deciding who lives and who dies by the powerful is tantamount to “expulsion from humanity altogether” (“Necropolitics” 21). Bello’s relationship with Iyese displays a clear sense of class dichotomy. The imbalance in their relationship is reinforced by gender and the social status of their different occupations. As a major in the army and privileged by his masculinity, Bello sees Iyese (a sex worker and a woman) as lacking social value, and her death has no consequence. To avenge his presumed double hurt – his descent from an upper class to relate with her, and her assault on this descent – he makes her pay with her body. Bello sees an assault on Iyese’s body and life as commensurate for the insult he claims to have received from her. This resonates with Obofun’s decision to rape Adisa again and again in Iyayi’s *Violence*, because he feels defeated by her impassivity at the moment he rapes her. Bello, therefore, rapes Iyese brutally, this time not because he loves it when women cry, but according to him to “close her dirty trap [her voice]”

for demanding her freedom (*Arrows* 159). Violent transgression of the body consequently becomes a mechanism for closure both of voice and the border.

The brutality of Iyese's rape achieves a realistic representation of the symbolic rape of the masses' identity and voice during the military regime in the second writing generation. Lying in a pool of her own blood, she narrates her rape to Bukuru:

'He [Bello] came with three men. They had daggers.'

'The men pinned me to the bed. Then Isa [Bello] stabbed my vagina with a dagger. I started bleeding. That's when he entered me with his penis.'

'It was like the stab of the knife, but more painful.'

'They pushed me down on the bed and forced apart my legs. Isa brought out his dagger and said he wanted to teach my vagina a lesson.' (*Arrows* 166-67)

Bello sees Iyese as nothing more than a sexual object whose existence is tied to its function; thus, he associates her totality with a part of her: her vagina. Much like Obofun and Queen, he stands for the socio-political elites, whose interclass interaction with the poor masses is predicated exclusively on the labour the latter produces. And because Bello sees only the functional significance of Iyese, he believes that teaching her vagina a lesson suffices for teaching her a lesson. Through this synecdoche, the novel exposes the objectification of the lower class, whose existential identity is tied to their function as labour. The act of objectifying the oppressed echoes Freire's claim that the oppressor's control of the class border is driven by his/her tendency to "in-animate" everything and everyone he/she encounters (59). Furthermore, the graphic image of three men pinning a woman down in order to enact a penetration of the phallic image (the dagger and the penis) emphasises the violence of masculinity against feminine vulnerability.

Prostitution has always been a motif in African literature. Works such as David G. Maillu's *Unfit for Human Consumption* (1973), Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* (1987), and Bode Osayin's *The Noble Mistress* (2000) engage with the issue. In most cases these authors present only a moralistic narrative which reveals their religious or ideological disposition. Accordingly, they fail to analyse the socio-economic conditions that force these women into the profession they most obviously do not enjoy. In contrast to these authors, Ndibe is not interested in the moral judgment of the prostitutes. Indeed, he is acutely aware of the socio-economic conditions that force them into the profession. He sees them as vulnerable members of society who are easily used, abused, and disposed of. There is, however, a palpable tendency in Ndibe to see

the prostitutes as a representative of the Nigerian people, who are also used, abused, and disposed of by the ruling class. In this way, Ndibe metaphorises prostitution. Ndibe describes Nigerian society with particular reference to the political elites, using the tropes of prostitution. He maps military/civilian dichotomy through the vehicle of the prostitute and the act of prostitution, considering the violator and the violated respectively. He shows that civilians are to the military what prostitutes are to their patrons. This paralleling of civilian/military and prostitute/patron helps Ndibe make his socio-economic argument.

Social construction of the bodies of prostitutes presents them as sources of contamination. Chinyere Nwahunanya acknowledges this in his study of the image of the prostitute in postcolonial African literature when he states that “the high incidence of STDs and HIV/AIDs is traceable to high rates of prostitution” (349). Cast in these social perceptions, the prostitute is criminalised and condemned to be removed from the social space. In *Arrows of Rain*, criminalisation of prostitution empowers the military to hunt and molest the prostitutes at night. The text’s paradoxical representation of military enjoyment of prostitutes in the day and criminalisation of the prostitutes at night portrays the absurdity of state power. Melissa H. Ditmore argues that African literature engages prostitution as a representation of “fragmentation and failure in the African leadership system” (15). In agreement with Ditmore, Nwahunanya acknowledges that the prostitute in postcolonial literature is “a figure for subtly examining post-colonial African societies with a view to assessing them in terms of their declared goals and overall achievements so far” (350). Ditmore and Nwahunanya’s assertion is evident in Ndibe’s use of the tropes of prostitution to emphasise the positionality of the oppressed and marginalised masses in relation to the Nigerian ruling class. Ndibe associates the complex, violent relations witnessed between Bello and Iyese and the military and the prostitutes to the relations between the political class and the civilians. The impunity with which Bello and his men rape Iyese (*Arrows* 166-167), as well as the military’s rape of the prostitutes, is a reflection of the dictatorial and de-humanising subjugation of the citizens by the corrupt political elites. For Ndibe, the privileged class exploits and victimises the working class and thereby makes them physical outcasts (Bukuru’s exit to the Beach), moral outcasts (in the prostitutes), and social outcasts (in the material and symbolically underprivileged).

Ndibe humanises prostitutes in the same way that he seeks to humanise the people being exploited. By providing personal details of the prostitutes, he draws the reader into an empathetic relationship with them. With Iyese, for instance, Ndibe provides certain background knowledge by tracing her familial and marital problems. The knowledge of her background

encourages identification with her. It helps the reader to understand her more profoundly, and to see her as human being with her own identity. The reader also realises that Iyese and the other prostitutes do not ordinarily take to prostitution, but are driven into it by constraining social conditions. Tay-Tay, one of the prostitutes raped by the military, attests: “I join them [prostitution] only when things are hard. For one night; at most two. Just to make quick money” (*Arrows* 215). The prostitute, therefore, serves as a visual metaphoric image that embodies the violence of social constraints and inequality.

While there is no doubt that Ndibe succeeded in drawing the attention of the society to the condition of the prostitutes, in metaphorising prostitutes he runs the risk of instrumentalising them. He uses the prostitutes as a tool to achieve the higher goal of portraying the condition of Nigeria. The prostitutes are used to make an argument about a larger issue; implicitly there is no direct interest in the prostitutes. Their presentation seems to be a means to an end. And, because the text does not directly call attention to the plight of the prostitutes, one may argue that they are important to Ndibe only to the degree that they serve his larger socio-economic argument. This instrumentalisation may be explained by the demands of the social Marxist matrix in which Ndibe writes. To be sure, social Marxism pays particular attention on how society functions economically, and because this view of Marxism pays much attention to larger issues in society, it often ignores the individual. Hence, Ndibe uses the tropes of the prostitute and prostitution to expose the violence of the political elite and show them as the real outcasts in their inhumanity to the civilians. The body of the prostitute becomes the body of the nation, embodying not only its rottenness and decay, but most importantly its resistance.

Border Resistance and Reclaiming Agency

Border resistance from the marginalised takes varied forms: it is either a resistance against or for inclusion. For Okonkwo and the Biafrans discussed in the previous chapter, border resistance involves challenging oppressive inclusivity. That is, rejecting the dominant group that insists on debordering for selfish ends. In class-border resistance, the insistence on debordering emanates from the lower class as they struggle to fight violent structures, objectification, and inequality through revolution, as in Iyayi’s *Violence*, or through agency of voice. Challenging objectification creates interclass tension. In Iyayi’s *Violence*, for instance, Idemudia’s resistance upsets Queen, who resolves to destroy him by revealing his wife’s infidelity and dismissing him from her employment. Queen’s reaction to Idemudia’s resistance intends a physical removal of the latter from a place of survival. In *Arrows of Rain* the military

leaves no room for opposition, and any form of protest calls forth a violent performance of difference. A typical example is Bello's lethal reaction to Iyese's decision to end her sexual slavery in his hand and regain her freedom. Bello sees her decision to quit prostitution (manifest in her pregnancy for Bukuru, whom she truly loves) as a challenge and as a negation of her sexual essence. He does not only assault her body by raping her, but goes on to murder her.

Almost like Iyese's fate, Bukuru's challenge of Bello's brutality occasions his "double peripherality" to use John House's terms (qtd in "Borders and Bordering" 179). By double peripherality, House refers to the situation of living at the physical border as an economically, socially, and politically marginalised person. Bukuru's flight to the beach and disguise as a madman for fear of Bello's brutality disassociates him from every privilege. His disguise as a madman for the twenty years of Bello's military regime is a psychological crossing from sanity to insanity, which achieves a numbing of his past until it is ironically resurrected by a similar incidence of rape, which had driven him to the beach a decade ago. Bukuru's resolve to reclaim his voice after 20 years of silence is condemned by the state as an effort "to malign the reputation of the Madian armed forces [and the president]" (*Arrows* 33). However, he insists on re-crossing the border and challenging military dictatorship, even at the cost of his life. He is imprisoned for his insistence on accusing and opposing the military and the president as perpetrators of the incessant rapes of prostitutes.

Bukuru's prison cell enables an encounter with his untold story after a decade of silence and withdrawal to the Beach. The power of Bukuru's prison resonates with Daniel Roux's claim that the prison is "a curious pastiche of the new and the old, a kind of laboratory where history cooks up its experiments, where we discover the deformation of the old still entangled with the inchoate emergence of the new" ("Inside/Outside" 248). Roux's claim particularly applies to Bukuru and his experience in the prison. In the prison cell Bukuru comes to terms with his former life and his neglects as a journalist. He comes to terms with the present necessity to respond to the story he has carried in him for 20 years. He not only discovers how deformed his past has been, but also accepts the need to free the past in the present – the entanglement of the past and the new. So, the privacy of his cell empowers his desire to engage the power that suppresses his voice. He responds to the demand for a narrative, which is "one of the characteristics of a prison" (Roux, "Inside/Outside" 255; Roux, "I Speak to You" 23). He therefore seeks Femi's help in the publication of his story. Through telling his story in the form of a letter addressed to Femi, Bukuru enacts multiple forms of border crossing, since "[e]very border-crossing is furthermore a crossing of borders on several different scales, planes or

scapes” (Schimanski "Reading from the Border" 65). First, Bukuru’s story crosses a corporeal border and takes the form of a written story. Secondly, the written story crosses the topographic borders of the prison cell to the public. The movement from the private to the public enables an epistemological border crossing in Femi, who gains knowledge of his paternity and becomes a voice in the accomplishment of Bukuru’s request: “You must wonder why I wanted to see you. It’s simple. I wanted to ask you to be the voice for my story” (*Arrows* 48). These processes of border interweaving and crossings achieve an exposition of the destructive powers of the elites and possible social-border bridging. Border crossings in this sense can be interpreted as a transformative process capable of reducing interclass differences.

The beach, the prison cell, and Iyese’s room are private spaces which incubate stories of power dynamics that must be given a voice. They are spaces whose narratives have to be let out into the public for individual and societal liberation. The violence against the weak at the beach, in the chalets, and in the rooms of the prostitutes are oppressions to be challenged by moving violence out from the private domain and into the public, through telling and journalistic reporting. Beyond revolutionary action in Iyayi’s *Violence*, the agency of the voice as capable of weakening the effect of violence is employed. For instance, when Idemudia discovers his wife’s infidelity, he laments more for Adisa’s silence. He cries ““Oh my God! ... Why didn’t she tell me? Why?” He would not ask why she had done it because he understood very clearly now” (*Violence* 307). He understands that the shame of rape keeps her in perpetual bondage and silence. And so, for Iyayi and Ndibe, liberation from the bondage of class domination invariably lies in speaking out.

Ndibe, however, does not exonerate the masses in apportioning blame for social disparity. He exposes them as accomplices in the crime of socio-political inequality. Bukuru’s arrest and his forceful re-crossing from the margins of the city (the Beach) to the court is the author’s way of satirising his (Bukuru) initial choice of silence and flight. By bringing Bukuru through a full cycle back to the penalty of his silence and condemning him for that which he left undone, Ndibe calls for active participation for social change. Bukuru condemns himself and admits his silence is foolishness for which he is guilty. He tells Femi: “But I was weak: I never wanted to be touched by anything that quickened the heart or made the soul sweat. Now, when I wish to speak out, I have no way of making my voice heard – unless you will help me” (*Arrows* 49). Bukuru regrets not telling Iyese’s story when he had the opportunity to do so, and when telling it would realise a possible change in the course of Madian history.

Ndibe further condemns those who not only keep silence in the face of social injustice but who lend their voice to applaud the fraudulent elites. He contrasts the luxury of the ministers in the city with the dilapidated and malfunctioning social amenities in the villages. He worries that ministers who create and manage these inequalities are still applauded by their people, who fail to see the politicians' loot as directly connected to their poverty.

You hear all stories about ministers using public funds to buy cars for their mistresses ... You go to any village and you're shocked by the squalid life there. The dust roads. Hospitals that have neither drugs nor doctors. The polluted stream water the people drink. The lack of electricity ... Then you're faced with pathetic irony of the villagers lining up to hail the nabob in the Royce – the very man who's plundered their country.
(*Arrows* 120)

Ndibe, therefore, blames both sides of the social divide for class borders created by “pervasive corruption” and negligence. While he foregrounds the state's suppression of voice as a form of violence, he exposes as more disturbing the inertia of the crowd to political issues and oppressive governance.

As a journalist and a literary activist, Ndibe believes that when words cross the corporeal or spatial border – leaving the private space for the public – they attain the social significance necessary for effecting change. Believing in the power of individual action, Ndibe slightly deviates from Marxist political ideology, and exposes the principles of Marxism as inconsistent and weak before economic and political pressure. He questions Marxist ideology in the character of Professor Sogon Yaw, a political scientist and famous Marxist at Madia University. At first, Yaw “detects a bourgeois plot in every imaginable event and situation” and develops a physical association with Marxism by “cultivat[ing] a Marx-like beard” (*Arrows* 83). However, when he is appointed the Minister for External Affairs, he yields without hesitation to the lure of power, and to everyone's amazement presents himself “within a few hours ... to be sworn in ... clean shaven, and [he] made his vows in a quiet, even voice” (*Arrows* 83). With Yaw, Ndibe signals that group activism, which can be sabotaged, is not enough for social change.

To counter social injustice, Ndibe prioritises the power of the word and individual activism. That may explain why he brings back Bukuru to repair what he has done badly. This also informs his use of the first-person voice to tell his story and his particularity with numbers and details in his narration. He considers persuasive telling (voicing) a part of bordering processes

that has "the effect ... of constituting, sustaining, or modifying borders" (Parker and Vaughan-Williams, 'Critical Border Studies' 729). He also recalls Bukuru from the margin (the beach) to the centre (the city) as a form of reinstatement of the individual and a challenge to the narrative of anonymity hitherto accorded to the city space. Through Bukuru's narrative voice, Ndibe declares his own stand as an individual and a literary activist: "against the power of the state, I can only throw this story. I know: it is a feeble weapon. But it is the only weapon I have. A time shall come when those who today sit on the heads of others will themselves be called to account" (*Arrows* 54).

Conclusion

Iyayi's *Violence* and Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* represent borders and border management in relation to the spatial and symbolic locations (and dislocations) of characters. By juxtaposing the wretchedness of the masses with the affluence and brutality of the elites, the texts focus attention on socio-economic and political categorisation. The texts further engage the dynamics and complexity of class bordering violently performed to restrict social interaction for the lower class. By engaging socio-economic stratification, the two novels propose models for class de-bordering and social change. Iyayi proposes group and individual revolution as a way of addressing the problem of an unequal society and bridging the socio-economic gap. By framing capitalism through a paradigm of exploitation and violence, he emphasises the role of the working-class struggle and revolution in actualising social change. Ndibe, on the other hand, does not overtly subscribe to the use of revolution to effect political change. He considers Marxist ideology both remedial and ambivalent. Ndibe therefore believes that salvaging the nation lies mostly in the resolution of individuals (such as Bukuru) to give up the folly of silence, and to attack social injustice from within with the spoken or the written word. Thus, he indicts the populace for their silence and passivity in condemning evil, which makes them accomplices in the quagmire of socio-economic dichotomies.

The production and reproduction of socio-economic divides and the interweaving of past and present traumatic moments of violence reveal a critical engagement with Nigerian history, asserting the texts as socially committed, and the authors as literary activists. *Violence* and *Arrows of Rain* also interrogate socio-economic and political categorisation in relation to bodies and spaces, as well as bodies in spaces. In the contact between bodies and memories, and in everyday human labour (a tangible part of the city network), the novels expose a hegemonic structure that requires a de-bordering. These texts affirm Paasi's assertion that

“[t]erritorial boundaries, symbolisms and institutions are social constructs and processes that are impregnated with power and are in a perpetual process of becoming” (Paasi “Bounded Spaces” 225). Hence, Iyayi and Ndibe suggest that radical revolution and persuasive telling (voicing) are bordering processes which have the effect of challenging or modifying borders. Iyayi and Ndibe believe that the masses, wholly and/or individually, should be critical participants in challenging dehumanising social difference. The labourers’ strike and Idemudia’s rejection of bribery and sexual enticement typify struggles aimed at challenging class borders. In a similar vein, the passivity of Adisa and Iyese as they suffer sexual oppressions and rape is a psychic destabilisation for the social elites. Ndibe’s metaphorisation of prostitution, though it seems to instrumentalise the prostitutes, achieves an exposition of the inhumanity and oppression of the Nigerian political system of the second literary generation.

Arrows of Rain is a border text by its publication at the temporal border between the second and the third generations. The coincidence of the inter-generational position of the text and Femi’s unresolved identity at the end of the story have symbolic importance. Femi’s detachment from the generational link represented by the suicide of Bukuru prefigures the concerns of the third generation (to be analysed in the next chapter), where the individual becomes the nodal point through which identity is questioned. Nigeria’s third literary generation exposes the multiplicity of identity and the confrontation with belonging within and beyond the national border. While the historical escalation of dictatorship increased the number of Nigerians fleeing national borders for safety, entry into the international space underpins an encounter with racism and subsequent negotiation of racial borders. Transnational interaction heightened interrogation of stereotypes such as gender roles and sexuality, which were hitherto either normalised or silenced. Contemporary writings thus foreground the emancipation of the individual from the cultures of generalisation; a precedence set by the revolutionary working class and individuals in the novels of the second generation.

CHAPTER FOUR

Borders, Bordering and the Contemporary Moment

Introduction

There is a crucial continuity between the second and the third generation of Nigerian writers. The second-generation writers played a revolutionary role as literary activists charged with the responsibility of challenging the divide created by the economic mismanagement of socio-political elites. They depicted the masses' struggle for survival in a society where systems and institutions of inclusion and exclusion were pre-determined and managed to ensure systemic violent exclusion. The third generation continues to challenge exclusive bordering, but this time also from across the national border and influenced by Western liberalism. Moving into the global space of literary activism, they re-imagine national and international systems of exclusion. Historically, the emergence of third-generation writers on the international scene is related to the dictatorial military government and gross human rights violations of the late 1990s, as well as the dire economic situation that prompted massive emigration from the country.

Activists and writers such as Clement Nwankwo (1999), Heather Hewett (2005), and Sule E. Egya (2011; 2012) capture the tension of the dictatorial military regime in Nigeria and its ironically revitalising effect on literature. Nwankwo, a Nigerian human rights activist, noted of Abacha's regime as the military president from 1993-1998: "[Abacha] embarked on the most devastating campaign of human rights abuse and economic pillage in Nigerian history. He had ordered the execution of several human rights and pro-democracy activists, jailed others, and driven the rest into hiding or exile" (156). For instance, in 1995, Abacha executed Ken Saro-Wiwa, an environmental activist and writer. He also proclaimed a death sentence on Wole Soyinka, the prominent Nigerian Nobel Prize winner, causing Soyinka to flee to the United States. A large number of Nigerians, mostly journalists and writers, also fled the country to what they assumed to be the safety of the West (mostly America and Britain). Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton assert that a great deal of contemporary Nigerian writing emphasises "deprivation ... denial of human rights and aspirations, and ... degradation of social relations under a series of increasingly despotic and corrupt regimes" ("Nigeria's Third Generation Writing" 11).

The relocation to Western metropolises reinforced the creative identity of the third-generation writers and their engagement with local and global issues. Their relocation increased

international visibility, with works such as Helon Habila's *Waiting for an Angel* (2002), Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), and Chris Abani's *Graceland* (2004) receiving critical accolades. Referring to the third-generation writers in the West as "literary ambassadors," Oluwole Coker, a postcolonial critic, agrees that their diasporic positionality enables a "constant dialogue with the Western world" (n.p). The writers' migration to the West coincides with the increased mobility of cultural articles (goods, capital, services, and knowledge) and human resources, enabled by globalisation in the late twentieth and the twenty-first century. Influenced by the trending culture of transnational exchange, the third-generation writers concentrated on articulating hybridisation and the effect of multiculturalism in the continuous negotiation of individual and group belonging. Cast in the messy intersection of cultures, contemporary writings such as Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and Ndibe's *Never look an American in the Eye* (2016), problematise the inter-racial space and present individuals in inter-racial border crossing and bordering as having or lacking self-actualisation. Back home, a resurgence of the novel was also taking place. Writers such as Promise Okekwe, Akachi Adimora, Toni Kan, and Bina Nengi Ilagha added to the international visibility of the third generation.

While it seems that the impressive proliferation of fictional writings of the third generation created difficulty in terms of the thematic and ideologic categorisation of the writings, it is fair to state that these writers, whether on the continent or in the diaspora, engage individual emancipation from national and global socio-cultural hegemony. They attempt a lifting of the silence of subjugation by narrating forms of oppressions that delineate humans into groups, subjecting the excluded to the margins of society. According to Willem Jacobus Smit, one of the seminal characteristics of Nigerian third-generation novels is the "voicing of marginal identities" (1). For Smit, this generation drew attention to other possibilities of being and becoming enabled by the challenging or breaking of barriers formed by hegemonic construction of identities which obstruct personal expansion and becoming (Smit 24). As alternative voices and agencies for individual emancipation, the third-generation writers narrate the resilience and the "triumph over adversity ... [of] individuals [characters and writers] who refused to be silenced" (Hewett 74).

Third-generation writings, therefore, deviated from the nationalistic orientation and "central organizing principle" (Garuba 63) of the first generation. Adélèke Adéèkó holds a similar view when he argues that the contemporary novelists' use of emigration for narrative closure (for example Habila's *Waiting for an Angel*, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, and Abani's *Graceland*)

is a movement away from “the ‘dying for the nation’ sentiment that dominated earlier nationalist narratives” (“Power Shift” 12). Through this assertion, Adéèkó points to the fact that unlike the novels of the first generation, where the individual’s allegiance to the community conditions his or her choices, characters’ sense of self is more acutely foregrounded in contemporary novels. Anty Ifeoma in *Purple Hibiscus* could leave the shores of the country “untainted by the odium of betrayal” (Adéèkó, “Power Shift” 12). Thus, in re-imagining cultural hegemony and spatial fixity, the contemporary writers portray characters who take ethical responsibility for themselves, without the constraint of loyalty to the nation space.

Third-generation writing also challenged the tendency of earlier narratives to place women in subservient roles. Novels such as Unoma Azuah’s *Sky-High Flames* (2005), Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dancer* (2012) and *Black Sisters Street* (2007), Sefi Atta’s *Everything Good Will Come* (2005), Lola Shoneyin’s *The Secret of Baba Segi’s Wives* (2010), Promise Okekwe’s *Women from the Crystal Deep* (2012), and Chinelo Okparanta’s *Under the Udala Tree* (2015) narrate an empowering of marginal subjectivities in a revolutionary way, unlike the parochial representation of gender and sexuality by the first- or second-generation writers, such as Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta. In Heather Hewett’s terms, the third generation of Nigerian writers (especially female writers) claim “sexuality or sexual independence as a form of empowerment” (81). We also see this reclaiming of narrating authority by contemporary female writers in relation to national politics. Regarding this claim and with particular reference to Adichie’s works, Susan Andrade acknowledges “earlier female writers’ representations of national politics become most sharply visible through allegorical readings of familial structures and institutions and, more importantly, female writers have changed their writing style and now represent the national imaginary more directly” (92). Thus, it can be said that writers of both genders explore topics and issues hitherto considered “not proper” for public engagement, thereby questioning the status quo and speaking the formerly unspeakable.

The figure of the child is also more prominent in third-generation writing. Children tend to feature as main characters in the authors’ narration of issues of national and global concern. Novels such as Sefi Atta’s *Everything Good will Come* (2001), Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), Chris Abani’s *Graceland* (2004) and *Becoming Abigail* (2006), Unoma Azuah’s *Sky-High Flames* (2005), Dulue Mbachu’s *War Games* (2005), Uzodinma Iweala’s *Beasts of No Nation* (2006), and Elnathan John’s *Born on a Tuesday* (2016) present the child, teenager, or young adult protagonist as caught in the socio-cultural quagmire or as a child soldier in the maze of religious and political conflict. Within these conflict zones, the child struggles with

self-actualisation. Abigail in Abani's *Becoming Abigail* and Ofunne in Azuah's *Sky-High Flames* are examples of child resilience and successful identity negotiation through the restricting borders of culture. Abigail exhibits strength and inner power to fight her way through the systemic structures of sex trafficking. In other cases, however, self-actualisation for the child is difficult as inhumanity and social pressure leads the child to a loss of selfhood. He/she becomes a victim as well as a perpetrator of violence. Agu, the child soldier in Iweala's *Beast of No Nation* and Dantala in John's religious insurgency novel *Born on a Tuesday*, typify children's unsuccessful negotiation of the space of the border. Portraying the difficulty of symbolic border negotiation from the viewpoint of the child deepens understanding of the ills of violently performed difference. Madelaine Hron believes that the figure of the child "intrinsically enmeshed in a cultural and social community" is an "apt vehicle for the third-generation of Nigerian authors ... to convey their perspective on Nigerian [and global] culture, in the context of multiculturalism, globalization, and even international human rights, to Western readers [and Nigerians alike]" (28-29).

Though the third-generation writing engages diverse thematic interests²⁵, this chapter concentrates on the themes of racism, gender, and religion as principle historic concerns. The chapter examines Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer* (2012), and Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* (2016) in their representation of boundaries codified by racial, gender, and religious ideologies. Moreover, the choice of two female writers – Adichie and Unigwe – against one male writer in this chapter is an indication of the dominant presence of female writers in this period, observed by Adesanmi and Dunton as the first of its kind in the history of Nigerian fiction ("Introduction: Everything Good Is Raining" XI). I examine these selected novels as border narratives, exposing how differences are socially constructed and managed. Reading the distinctive spatio-symbolic spaces that individuals inhabit as border territories, I also look at the complexity of characters' identity negotiation at the intersection of borders.

This chapter is divided into three sections that engage the novels' distinct ways of representing the border. The first section, which addresses *Americanah*, foregrounds transnational border crossing and bordering. It underscores racial encounters as tensed and hegemonic borderlands that make the characters either yield to or resist racial borders in the process of self-actualisation. The second section, which discusses *Night Dancer*, problematises gender

²⁵ Brenda Cooper referred to the third generation as "roamers and adventurers" with reference to the freedom with which they commit themselves to varied themes (163).

differences and challenges traditional gender roles. My reading is anchored in Gloria Anzaldúa's idea of, "leaving 'home', standing against the status quo, to find oneself, to find one's intrinsic nature buried under the personality that has been imposed on one" (38). *Americanah* and *Night Dancer*, as border and border-crossing narratives, expose an encounter with the border as a necessary point of self-definition. Here, I argue that the border is first and foremost a hindrance to becoming. Yet, at this border the individual's determination not only results in self-actualisation, it also facilitates a more inclusive existence. The third section, which addresses *Born on a Tuesday*, presents the religious border. This section allows an examination of the escalated religious concerns in present-day Nigeria, as well as the investigation of the border from the perspective of the child, which none of the text analysed so far has engaged.

Religion has always been an intricate part of Nigerian socio-political life. Nevertheless, religious conflict intensified with the rising of Pentecostalism, the proliferation of churches, the Islamic projects²⁶, and the recent insurgence of Islamic extremism (Boko Haram²⁷) in the country. Religious violence between and within the dominant religious groups in Nigeria – Islam and Christianity – is considered a threat to Nigerian lives and national stability, and has taken the frontline in the national discourse. My discussion, however, concentrates on a strand of this conflict: Islamic intra-religious conflict, which has increased as a consequence of the insistence on sharia codes and religious practices that circumscribe citizens, especially those who live in the northern part of the country. The twenty-first century records the acceleration of the process of Islamisation of the northern region and, by extension, the entire country (Garuba 65; Adesoji, "The Boko Haram Uprising" 103). Hence, my concentration on Islamic intra-religious conflict lends academic weight to the discourse of the individual (especially the child insurgent) caught at the horrific border of religious extremism.

²⁶ An overt or covert effort by insurgents and Muslims to make Nigeria an Islamic country. This is evident in the Muslim government enforcement of policies such as the scrapping of Christian Religious Subject from the secondary school syllabus, the institution of the Sharia law in nine Muslim-majority states in 1999, and the pronouncement of the insurgent leader Abubakar Shekau: "Boko Haram is just a version of the Al Qaeda which we align with and respect. We support Osama bin Laden, we shall carry out his command in Nigeria until the country is totally Islamized which is according to the wish of Allah" (Gray and Adeakin 193; Adesoji, "The Boko Haram Uprising" 103).

²⁷ Boko Haram is an insurgent group in the north-eastern part of Nigeria whose founding date has been debated to be between 1995 and 2002 (Pieri and Zenn 71). The name Boko Haram loosely translates to "western education is forbidden, ungodly, sinful" (Adesoji, "Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram" 106; Solomon 227). Founded by Mohammed Yusuf, the group believes that it is on a jihad mission to propagate the unadulterated teaching of Prophet Mohammed. Benjamin Maiangwa et al. attributed the origin of Boko Haram to the dissatisfaction with the lightness with which Sharia Law is implemented in Nigeria's northern states (45).

My discussion of these three novels exposes issues such as race, gender, and religion as border factors that underscore stratification, cross-border relationships, and the resultant effect on identity construction. As essential components of the social imaginary, the novels make the process of institutionalised inclusion and exclusion visible through the revealing of binary distinctions (us/them, here/there, inside/outside) between places, groups, and persons at a variety of scales. Whereas *Americanah* and *Night Dancer* project the possibility of attaining a new self-consciousness that accepts the difference of the other, *Born on a Tuesday* takes us through another crucial possibility of violent exclusion that destroys the violated and, in the worst case scenario, makes him/her a violator in a cycle of violence. The first two novels allow for self-actualisation, while the third shows the limits of achieving any self-actualisation. Furthermore, the novels reveal the class dynamics in the realisation of self-actualisation. The characters in the first two novels are middle class characters, whereas in *Born on a Tuesday* the marginalised characters are right at the bottom of the economic ladder. The texts, therefore, show how self-actualisation is enabled or disabled by the material and social resources available to the characters.

Reading the Racial Border in Chimamanda Adichie's *Americanah*

Born in 1977, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie left Nigeria at the age of 19 for the United States, where she continued her education. She has contributed immensely to many aspects of international socio-political discourse on issues such as gender inequality, stereotyping, and racism. She has also made a great impact on the Nigerian literary and the social spheres through her literary works and social engagements, which thematically inscribe national problems. Among many awards, Adichie's first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), which foregrounds religious fundamentalism, was shortlisted for the Orange Prize for fiction and longlisted for the Booker Prize in 2004. Eventually, she won the Orange Prize in 2007 with her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), which reimagines the Nigerian-Biafran war. Adichie's third novel, *Americanah*, engages transnational issues, ranging from migration to displacement and deracination, which are part of the core concerns of Nigeria's third generation writers. Published in 2013, *Americanah*'s emigrational temporality foregrounds the historical moment of its Nigerian setting. It points to the era of economic and political upheaval in Nigeria that resulted in the massive emigration of Nigerians, including trained and highly qualified elites, to America and Europe.

Americanah begins with the protagonist Ifemelu's visit to a hair salon in Trenton a few days before her final return to Nigeria after 13 years living in America. At the salon, Ifemelu experiences a long flashback that recounts her life in Nigeria before she left for the US, and the desperation of some Nigerians to leave Nigeria for the West due the corrupt socio-political and educational system in Nigeria. She also recalls her encounter with racism in America and her relationship with the characters whose lives are part of her own identity negotiation. Her aunt, Uju, who migrated to America before her, plays an important role in her racial transitions. Additionally, Ifemelu's respective relationships with her white and African-American boyfriends (Curt and Blaine) are moments of self-negotiation. While in America, Ifemelu becomes an influential race blogger, an identity that allows her a presence as an active but anonymous border activist. This activism later plays out in her radical decision to return to Nigeria, a decision that surprises her blog followers and amazes those for whom transnational border-crossing is an act of no return.

Simultaneously the novel centres on the life of another major character, Obinze. Obinze is Ifemelu's ex-boyfriend in Nigeria, who reunites with Ifemelu when she returns to Nigeria. Obinze presents another level of migrancy and border-crossing. Having been denied an American visa, he leaves Nigeria for England. His life in England is analysed later in this chapter as a form of erasure occasioned by racism. Arrested due to an expired visa, he willingly accepts deportation and returns to Nigeria. In Nigeria, Obinze realises that, despite the economic hardship that forces Nigerians to migrate, home offers better opportunities for self-emancipation.

Scholarly works on *Americanah* have examined the manifestations of racism and characters' reactions to racial structures without necessarily examining the complexities of moving from one racial space to another (Levine 2015; Okolocha 2016; Meher 2017; Phiri 2017). For instance, for Caroline Levine, *Americanah* has the ability to describe the familiar and at the same time narrate a distance from the familiar. She argues that the text distances its major characters from the "comforts of convention" (603) and thus problematises that taken for granted. She reads Ifemelu and Obinze as narratively related in their "*unwillingness to accept* habitual falsehoods – the routines of hypocrisy and posturing that organize social relations" (Levine 593, my emphasis). In contrast to Levine's reading, I believe that examining Ifemelu and Obinze as racial border dwellers suggest a temporal moment of *accepting* habitual falsehood and conforming to the oppressive racial system in a process of seeking racial acceptance. This temporal moment, to be expanded later in my analysis, precedes the

reawakening of self-identity and the subsequent decision to reject what is false and return to the home space. I will discuss this realisation as an epistemological border crossing that startles the migrant out of comprising with the norms of the racialised border.

Other critical works on *Americanah*, such as Mindi McMann's 2018 study, explore the circulation of racial identity as a condition of transnational contexts. In this section I extend the study of transnationalism in the novel by using the strategies of border poetics to emphasise transnational boundaries and marginalities. I examine *Americanah* as a racial border narrative that exposes "the intimate connections between borders [physical and symbolic], mobility, memory and narrative" (Schimanski and Wolfe, "Entry Point" 6). I investigate the strong network between the characters' migration, their encounter, and their transition at the borderlands. Thus, I present the characters themselves as borderlands composed of memories. In the characters, memories of home and abroad collide, each at one point or the other taking prominence or being suppressed. The two major characters in the novel, Ifemelu and Obinze, as well as some other migrants, are examined from three points of view: the process of "becoming multiple" due to the convergence and fluidity of cultures within the self and the pressure to become the racial other, the point of negotiating belonging and resistance, and finally re-crossing borders in new consciousness.

Transnationalism, according to some critics, foregrounds exchanges (flows and movements) beyond national boundaries (Levin 3; Fluck 366; Clavin 422). Patricia Clavin highlights that transnationalism does not only mean the transfer of goods and money across national borders, but it is primarily "about people: the social space that they inhabit, the networks they form and the ideas they exchange" (421). For Clavin, the transnational encounter is a personal and cultural passing over, across, and through the nation. It is a process of transforming and being transformed (423). This process resonates with the impactful character of socially constructed differences that directly affect daily life practices. The effect of differences, such as racial difference, lead to newly created transition ("translated") spaces and borderlands which, as many critics hold, are in a constant state of flux (Newman, "Borders and Bordering" 173, Steiner 140). "Constant state of flux" points to the fluidity and instability of both the migrants and the space they occupy, which the study re-imagines as hegemonic borderlands that prompt compromised or resistant responses in the process of negotiating identity. As a transnational text, therefore, *Americanah* foregrounds material and symbolic flows, crossings, and exchanges beyond one's country – between the individual and the unknown.

Transnational border crossing underscores a form of epistemological border crossing, a crossing over to new knowledge to encounter the strange. Explaining the epistemological border in relation to transnationalism, Johan Schimanski asserts that “epistemological borders are often placed between home territory and foreign places; the traveller travels into the unknown.... Topographical border crossings are inevitably accompanied by epistemological border crossings or border shiftings, as the border crosser interprets the other, and the border itself” (“Crossing and Reading” 54). For the migrant, the physical transnational crossing into the host country inevitably initiates an epistemological crossing. This is because the migrant is forced to learn the culture of the host country in order to adapt and to survive. And so, he/she moves from the private (one’s country) to the public, from the known to the unknown. The migrant also moves into awareness of his/her self and identity, which is subject to distortion by imperial gaze.

Before his/her transnational border crossing the migrant lives on some level of ignorance of the host country, having little or no knowledge of the cultures and the operations within the space he/she is about to enter. Moving to the West, for instance, awakens a self-identity and awareness of the colour line and cultural difference hitherto unknown. Reading the transnational perceptions of race in *Americanah*, McMann asserts that

the character who never would have thought of herself as “black” suddenly finds herself tagged with that label in her [or his] new circumstance, and this external characterization carries great power in defining her [or his] identity. This change in identity reveals the cultural and material contingency of race. (200)

Thus, for the migrant, transnationalism underscores crossing at multiple levels – topographical, epistemological, and cultural. Adichie describes her own racial awareness as a result of her transnational border crossing into America. She says: “[l]eaving Nigeria made me much more aware of being Nigerian and what that meant. It also made me aware of race as a concept, because I didn’t think of myself as black until I left Nigeria” (qtd in Bain, “Biography: Chimamanda” np). McMann’s assertion and Adichie’s personal experience resonate with Frantz Fanon’s claim that “as long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others” (109). The black man’s discovery of otherness is enacted in a comparable instance – the black man in relation to the white man, the black skin in relation to the white skin (Fanon 109). This discovery, argues Fanon, is “dislocating”, “imprisoning” and “amputating” (112). Hence my discussion of *Americanah* as a narrative of transnational encounter relating to the self in different degrees

of being and belonging. The novel is an act of agency that enables Adichie an expression of her very self and experience in the narrative's characters. As Christina Seiringer-Gaubinger acknowledges, Adichie's "choice of a very self-reflexive character for the protagonist is certainly one of her most powerful devices to express the perception of a migrant" (2). Furthermore, by writing characters that operate at different levels of hindered and unhindered transnational and racial border crossings and re-crossings, Adichie reveals the nitty-gritty of racial bordering.

Americanah, as a transnational border narrative, presents racial borders at different levels of presentation, inscribing racial exclusivity on the topographic and symbolic landscapes of the narrative. According to Schimanski, "border poetics ... attends to two kinds of spaces, the *presented space* (the world in the text) and the *space of presentation* (the text as part of the world)" ("Crossing and Reading" 51, emphasis in original)²⁸. The connection between these two spaces is the "kernel of border poetics" (Schimanski and Wolfe, "Entry Points: Introduction" 16). The connection between the world in the text and the figurality of what is presented foregrounds the temporality (historicity) of the border. Considering the movement and space of the train in *Americanah*, for instance, the presented interior and the topographical territories it traverses on its route connect to the issue of racial spatialisation that the text represents. Relating one of Ifemelu's usual train experiences, the narrator states:

It still startled her, what a difference a few minutes of train travel made. During her first year in America, when she took New Jersey Transit to Penn Station and then the subway to visit Auntie Uju in Flatlands, she was struck by how mostly slim white people got off at the stops in Manhattan and, as the train went further into Brooklyn, the people left were mostly black and fat. (15-16)

Ifemelu's observation underpins the racialised nature of residential segregation, what Daniel Roux calls "divided landscape" ("Inside/Outside" 251). Brooklyn and Trenton are spatially different from places such as Manhattan and Princeton in terms of racial habitation. While mostly blacks and black-Americans live in Brooklyn and Trenton, white Americans live in Manhattan and Princeton. The train transport from Princeton (where Ifemelu lives due to her

²⁸ This theorisation of the border as presented and represented has remained one of Johan Schimanski and Stephen Wolfe's key arguments in relation to border poetics. (Schimanski, "Crossing and Reading" 51; Schimanski, "Reading from the Border" 65; Schimanski and Wolfe, "Imperial Tides" 219; Schimanski and Wolfe, "Cultural Production and Negotiation of Borders" 41).

fellowship with Princeton University) to Trenton (where she goes to have her hair done by African hairdressers) is a crossing between two racial worlds. The train scene echoes the Jim Crow laws of southern states of America that segregated train and public facility users along the racial border²⁹. However, beyond mere allusion to the train as mobile racial space, Adichie seems to suggest that the train in the present-day America re-inscribes racial borders in a performative way. By capturing the racial dichotomies daily performed in the moment of alighting from the train, Adichie exposes the segregation otherwise veiled by the train's common usage.

Unlike the Jim Crow era, the present train takes in both white and black in a misleading convergence since, along its route, the whites alight at white areas and only the blacks continue to Trenton and Brooklyn. Under Jim Crow external legal force, asserted in the “White Only/Black Only” signs, forced racial exclusivity on train users by apportioning train space according to racial (and class) identity. Presently, train spaces seem open racially but are in fact still closed off according to the race and economic status of the traveller. The material signs of racial segregation may not be present in the internal space of the train, but they are visibly engraved on the geographical landscape of the train route. At the same time, the internal space of the train symbolises a fluid borderland where complete racial debordering cannot be achieved, since blacks and whites accommodated in the same space do not necessarily belong together. The train is, therefore, a space of elusive encounter – a microcosm of the Western space - that produces otherness as it moves between and across a multiplicity of racial inequality.

Ifemelu's observation, on the other hand, echoes Julia H. Lee's reading of the train as subverting its supposed symbolic freedom. Lee asserts that the merging of private identities and public space of the train, instead of democratising travel, “enables passengers and employees to accept passively the racial hierarchies of the day” (351). By the re-presentation of racialised spatial borders and by showing how Ifemelu has to undergo several interstate border crossings to achieve something as ordinary as braiding her hair, Adichie challenges the argument about the declining significance of race and colour-consciousness³⁰. She takes the

²⁹ Jim Crow laws, which mandated racial segregation in the use of public facilities, were in effect from 1877 to mid-1960s, when they were abolished under pressure from the civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King. This represents historical racial divisions in America that continue in the present day.

³⁰ Proponents of declining racial inequality are “William Julius Wilson (1980), Dinesh D'Souza (1995), Thernstrom and Thernstrom (1997)”. Believing that race is explicitly colour-coded, they claim that “racism is no longer as significant in affecting Blacks' conditions of life as it was before the civil rights movement” (Shams

reader through the subtle (and overt) manifestations of race, grounded in the route through which train and people travel, and its detrimental effect on the individual whose inalienable right to freedom is challenged.

From the territorial world of the text and its re-inscription of racial borders, *Americanah* produces a symbolic mapping of racism and racial border crossing embodied in the characters. I take particular interest in the two major characters, Ifemelu and Obinze, and their processes of racial border crossing, bordering, and return. Paying particular interest to Ifemelu and Obinze does not exclude the other migrant characters in my analysis; rather, these other characters are the antithesis of the major characters' willingness to question the racial status quo. My analysis depicts Ifemelu and Obinze's traversal, like the train, through the symbolic spaces of racism and the final alighting (prefigured in their return to their natal home) from the racial train. These two characters stand in for many African migrants' experience with the racial border: physical and symbolic. However, I trace the trajectory of racial border dwelling, navigation, and resistance, represented in Ifemelu and Obinze, as one strand of narratives of migrancy. Another narrative is the insistence to remain a migrant subject seen in characters such as Auntie Uju and Emenike (Ifemelu's classmate in Nigeria whose marriage to a white woman portrays a constrained consciousness to remain at the compromised racial borderland). The alternative narrative of insistence can also be seen in the deported blacks at the airport, who insist and strategise on countless return to America.

As stated earlier, Ifemelu and Obinze's experiences move through the process of "becoming multiple" and becoming the other due to the convergence and fluidity of cultures, becoming the "counterstance" by way of resistance, and finally re-crossing the border in a new consciousness. For Ifemelu, becoming the other is initially facilitated by her encounter with America through the books about America, which she reads during the early days of her migrancy. In the books, she discovers the power of knowledge and she acknowledges to Obinze in a letter that "America's mythology began to take on meaning, America's tribalism, – race, ideology and region – became clear. And she was consoled by her new knowledge" (160). The books, therefore, become a space of initial encounter with the unknown other, as well as the unknown self. Through the books, she realises America and her need to become the other, having crossed into the other's territory. She also realises that she inhabits a different racial

2015: 283). The proponents of declining racial inequality are opposed by race theorists and critics such as Howard Winant and Tahseen Shams, respectively, who believe that race as a social construct "change forms over time" and manifests in subtle ways. Thus the ideology of decreasing racial inequality held by the proponents is based on "flawed conceptualization of race" (Shams 290).

space, that she is black. The identity of America encountered at this moment of epistemological border crossing opens up an avenue of change in her (160). The books, as well as the people, buoy Ifemelu into a becoming that suggests a transition into American life. She uses the words and slang she learns in the books and mimics the American accent, thereby initiating linguistic compliance in the process of becoming the American other. And yet, even as she tries to assimilate with the American other, she is marked as an other due to her immigrant status. She is, in Fanon's terms, "barred ... from all participation" and forced to "stay within bounds" (114).

Beyond linguistic conformity, however, the racial confluence of the borderland necessitates a hybridisation or a total identity metamorphosis for the migrant. David Newman rightly reads changes in identity as possibilities of the border. He observes that boundaries are tied up with identity politics where "crossing from one compartment to another requires a change, or at the very least a dilution, of the group identities with which we affiliate" ("Boundaries" 124). While Newman discusses borders in broad terms, Amin Malak, with reference to M. G. Vassanji's characters, makes a particular reference to the demand for change that racism makes on migrants. Referring to this change as "currents of mutation", Malak holds that migrants change as a result of their prioritisation of survival in their lives, in order to deal with the "hound[ing] and haunt[ing] effect of racism, real or perceived" (280). Ifemelu's encounter with America, for instance, demands a *compulsory* identity change as the only option for survival. At first, according to Auntie Uju, Ifemelu is required to use Ngozi Okonkwo's Social Security Card if she intends to survive the economic demands of America (128). The identity change or split for survival is replete in some other third-generation Nigerian novels such as Chika Unigwe's *On the Black Sisters' Street* (2009). This change, according to one of the migrants in *Americanah*, Mwombeki, is engraved in the list of the dos and don'ts required for a successful border dwelling (164). Compliance allows a relative level of existence for the migrant. It ensures a "settle[ment] merely for what was familiar" (140). Auntie Uju, who attributes her success at an interview to her non-braided hair, advises Ifemelu, "I have told you what they told me. You do what you have to do if you want to succeed" (142). Situating the migrant in this space of indoctrination, Adichie portrays epistemological border crossing as preceding successful symbolic racial crossing. Yet the characters' endless conformity, what Anzaldúa calls "a state of perpetual transition" (78), questions the possibility of ever attaining successful racial border crossing.

Consequent upon racial convergence and the pressure to become the racial other, Ifemelu dwells in different subject positions (African and Americanised African). As the subject of multiple cultural territories, Ifemelu demonstrates conscious and unconscious readjustments, a to/fro movement between cultures, in order to fit into the racial mould (128). Her romantic relationship with the white American, Curt, is an instance of this attempt. This relationship makes becoming American easy but elusive. Similar to the Jim Crow “equal but separate” law, Ifemelu and Curt are in a relationship at different levels – dependent and privileged respectfully. Curt easily gets her a job that facilitates her obtaining a work visa and the green card. His assistance is overshadowing and disturbing, hence she feels “in the midst of her gratitude a small resentment: that Curt could, with a few calls, rearrange the world, have things slide into the spaces that he wanted them to” (236). Curt’s ability to “rearrange” Ifemelu’s world, therefore, emphasises her dependence and otherness. It keeps Ifemelu in the shadows as she straddles the racial borderlands in a constant struggle to become the other and to live in the gaze of the other.

Transnational border crossings are also embodied by conformity playing out on the body. The changes Ifemelu undergoes in her hair (from kinky hair to sleek and to braids) are symbolic of the multiple borders she traverses. Moving from her kinky braids to sleek and relaxed hair is dependent on Curt’s acceptance and on the white employer’s recognition of her as a “wonderful fit” (238) in the company. In all, there is a constant feeling of “a loss of an organic self” and a sense of “unfinishedness” (239). A similar feeling of loss and inhabiting the space of racial hegemony overshadows her in her later relationship with her black American boyfriend, Blaine. With him, she “began to floss, as she began to do other things he did” and though she feels “a step removed from the things [Blaine] believed, and the things he knew ... she was eager to play catch-up, fascinated by his sense of rightness” (358).

The transracial relationship between Ifemelu and Curt is an interaction that enables socialisation within the physically crossed border. That is, the transnational relationship enables the migrant an opportunity of realising relative visibility in the racial space. Ifemelu’s relationship with Curt has its benefits, such as facilitating citizenship or a green card procurement. Her relationship with Blaine, though it does not have the same racial dimension as her relationship with Curt, is not equal. Even though Blaine is an African American in a society that is deeply racist towards African Americans, he nonetheless has advantages from being from that society over Ifemelu, who is a stranger. The disparity between Blaine’s African American blackness and Ifemelu’s African blackness plays out in the constant pressure on

Ifemelu to conform to Blaine's standards. Ironically, therefore, transracial or transcultural relationships are border figures that authenticate racial distinctions by exerting enormous pressure on the dependent migrant to remain in the "current of mutations" (Malak 280). Thus, transracial relationships, such as those that exist between Curt (or Blaine) and Ifemelu, Emenike and Georgina, and Obinze and Cleotilde, instead of achieving racial border bridging, reinforce racial difference by asserting a pressure on the racially oppressed to conform in order to become the American other.

Identity compliance and/or erasure is an integral aspect of the condition for migrant characters' negotiation of their being and their self-actualisation at the racial border. As with Ifemelu, racial border crossing for Obinze in England imposes a form of invisibility. In a bid to survive, he disguises himself as Vincent Obi by taking Vincent's National Insurance Number to secure a job. Working under the disguise symbolises a displacement or erasure of identity. Through this change of identity (which is later sabotaged by Vincent Obi himself), Obinze becomes a paradox. He is both visible and invisible. He is visible because he walks the street and works for a living, but invisible because the person of Vincent eclipses him. This informs the incompleteness he feels, a sense of uneasiness when he sees any "policeman, or anyone in a uniform, anyone with the faintest scent of authority" (297) because he is not empowered. His status, according to the narrator, is like that of one written with a pencil, easy to be erased.

Obinze's experience as a border crosser resonates with Schimanski's assertion that border poetics not only deals with passages, "but also with hindered passages, with unsuccessful border crossings, where the potential border crosser is turned back" ("Crossing and Reading" 42). Obinze's deportation is only a physical manifestation of his continuous processes of unsuccessful racial crossing, shaped by his being undocumented. Despite the success of his spatial crossing into England he remains at the border threshold, unable to attain complete cultural crossing. Newman captures this moment of the migrant in a very succinct way. He states:

physically crossing the border often turns out to be the easy part of the crossing process. Just because a migrant worker from the Third World succeeds in making it to the land of their perceived dreams does not mean that they will feel comfortable living and working in their new places of residence. While they may have been allowed to legally cross the line of separation, they now find themselves culturally and linguistically excluded as part of a minority One border (the physical) has been crossed while a

new one (cultural) presents itself which may never be crossed successfully in their lifetime. (“Border and Bordering” 179)

Obinze’s transnational crossing into England does not relate directly to a successful cultural crossing. The sabotaged disguise and a failed green-card marriage contract with a stranger, Cleotilde, are instances of Obinze’s abortive attempts at becoming visible and crossing the cultural border. He is arrested on the day of his sham marriage and charged for illegal stay due to his expired visa. This arrest reawakens in Obinze a consciousness to reject falsehood and relieve himself of ambivalent identity. Thus, he wholeheartedly accepts deportation, at which his lawyer ticks “willing to be removed”, a phrase which, according to the narrator, designates Obinze as “inanimate ... a thing to be removed” (321), easily to be returned through the transnational re-crossing.

Through representing the dehumanisation of the migrant as an inanimate thing, Adichie exposes racism as oppressive. Racial oppression reduces the unwelcomed migrant to the status of goods which are part of the flows and exchanges of the transnational transaction. This form of racial oppression echoes Paulo Freire’s assertion that “the more the oppressor controls the oppressed, the more they change them into apparently inanimate ‘things’ without freedom” (59). In Obinze, as well as in Ifemelu, the struggle to be visible gears towards being accepted in the racial space. For the two, identity erasure and/or compliance is an imposition that functions as a racial guard which disallows entry into hegemonic racial conventions. However, the novel problematises the idea of remaining distorted and erased for racial border survival. It shows in the migrant an “inevitable unfolding” (103) and a consciousness that calls for self-assertion.

The novel examines a discomfort associated with identity distortion and compliance by exposing migrants’ conscious and unconscious links to the natal home. Examining the umbilical connection of the migrant to the natal home echoes Bracha L. Ettinger’s “matrixial borderspace”³¹. Ettinger asserts that the “matrixial borderspace is not an erasure or a cut but an encounter ... a separation-in-jointness that is not an incision or a cut from the archaic m/other” (*The Matrixial Borderspace* 124). Similarly, the racial encounter does not totally erase natal traces in the migrant. The traces may at any time be latent or suppressed, but they persist. These traces, which Debra Castillo calls “umbilical objects”, connect the migrant to his/her

³¹ Matrixial borderspace is Ettinger’s psychoanalytical theory that emphasises the unbreakable link between mother and the child in the womb. For Ettinger, the matrix, referring to the feminine uterus, symbolises relationality, an encounter between the self and the other that thrives in sharing.

motherland (the archaic m/other) in a relationship that is matrixial. According to Castillo, umbilical objects are objects, physical or symbolic, that function as the memory of the home, connecting the migrant to the motherland and at the same time reminding the migrant of present conditions (Castillo 124-125). The umbilical object connects the past to the present, paradoxically separating and joining the migrant to the motherland.

In *Americanah*, the memories and traces of home are portrayed in the braided hairstyle, native accent, and the mental re-imagining of opportunities and loved ones at home. These links and traces at the beginning of the racial encounter are suppressed in constant attempts at successful border crossing, which is never achieved. At a point, the migrant confronts racial domination through reinforcement of the umbilical objects and a return of what I term “racial gifts”, such as transracial relationships and a foreign accent. By doing so, the migrant resists racial hegemony and eventually re/crosses back to the natal space, physically or psychologically. Ifemelu, for instance, rejects the American accent and returns to the use of her Nigerian accent, which is a psychological return that precedes her actual return later in the novel. She also claims agency by crossing into the blogosphere, a global space that symbolises a form of transcendence above the racial space (the implication of this crossing into the virtual space, I will discuss later).

As for Obinze, he awakens to a new consciousness at the point of his arrest. With the handcuff around his wrists, “he felt himself watching the scene [of his arrest] from far away, watching himself walk to the police car outside, and sink into the too-soft seat in the back” (320). This moment of splitting gives him a look at what he has become with his crossing over to England, as well as a connection to his natal home. Remembering home in this sense mirrors what Tina Steiner calls “nostalgic backward glances” (136). As a “creature of his origin” (Steiner 31), Obinze compares his past and his present. He realises that he has symbolically lived his present life in chains and distortion. Standing away from his arrested self, he sees clearly that his ambivalent identity has been at the cost of his real self. He therefore voluntarily affirms his acceptance of deportation (323). Similar to Anzaldúa’s reference to a new *mestiza*³², Obinze is “jarred out of ambivalence by an intense, and often painful, emotional event which inverts or resolves the ambivalence” (101).

³² A new consciousness that goes beyond outright opposition to cultural dominance. It is the third space that breaks down the subject-object duality by tolerating contradiction and considering inclusion over exclusion (Anzaldúa 100-102).

Ifemelu's moment of a new consciousness, unlike Obinze's overt and unpalatable awakening, is also expressed as a frontal attack on racism through the agency of the blog. By my reading, the space of the blog, both as presented in the text (perceptible to the reader) and as a representation, is a dynamic space where bordering, border crossing, and belonging are performed. The relation between the narrative and the blog seems to reinforce the racial world Adichie creates. There is a typographical and chronological dissonance between the narrative and the blog – especially Ifemelu's blog when she lives in the US. Typologically the blogs are marked off from the normal font of the novel using the sans serif font. They also interrupt the chronological flow of the story. Some of them come in between storylines that have no immediate reference and connection to them. A typical example is the first blog entry in the novel which discusses the different forms of tribalism in America: "In America, tribalism is alive and well. There are four kinds – class, ideology, region, and race. First, class. Pretty easy. Rich folk and poor folk" (216). This blog written in an example of a sans serif font illogically follows Ifemelu's discussion with Auntie Uju's son after his return from the camp. Thus, the discussion of Dike's experience at the camp is interrupted in the following page with the blog entry that discusses the four parameters of racial division in America. And following this particular blog is the narrative present in the saloon where Ifemelu braids her hair.

The glaring difference between the two genres (blog and fiction) within the same medium (and same pages sometimes) indirectly maps the racial border that differentiates dwellers within the same Westernised global space. Its disruption and undermining of the text's narrative flow and hegemony, which I read as a tension in the textual landscape of the novel, connects significantly to the novel's space of representation; the racial tension. By this typological and chronological interruption, the blog does not only speak it also acts. It performs a challenge on narrative, racial and patriarchal hegemony. Aesthetically, she uses the blog to unsettle the dominant form of the novel and make visible her experience as well as the experiences of those who are other than western, white and men. As an African feminist, Adichie uses the form of the novel which has a western history and form, dominated by men and mostly white men to bring in her voice into the racial discourse.

Another important observation is the symbolic import of what causes Ifemelu to start the blog and the medial position its narration takes in the physical space of the text (341). She starts blogging after she breaks up with her white boyfriend Curt. Their break up allows her a more objective look into the racial dynamics of racism and her compliant identity in their relationship. From this objective stance, she feels strong enough to confront racism, though her

strength is problematised by the anonymity of the blog. Despite the anonymity, the blog, as Guarracino argues, is Ifemelu's written outlet of her racial self-awareness (15). It is an instance of epistemological crossing into the zone where racial emotions are expressed, performed, and shared. Territorially also it is a crossing from the material to the virtual world. The blog itself is a textual and symbolic border figure that marks a point of change and difference. It is Ifemelu's agency through her blogging that finally leads to her self-emancipation and radical decision to return.

In contrast to the racial sphere (such as the hierarchical relationships and the segregated residential places), the blogosphere exposes equal existence. One of the very few critics of Adichie's fictionalised blogging in *Americanah*, Serena Guarracino, holds the view that "[b]logs, with their foregrounding and sharing of personal experiences and opinions, belong to this interactive landscape in which power – cultural and otherwise – is elaborated on shared platforms" (5). Guarracino's view reiterates Jodi Dean's claim that blogs "offer exposure and anonymity at the same time ... [allowing exposure of] feelings and experiences, loves and hates, desires and aversions" (Dean 72). In her desire to animate her voice and those of others, Ifemelu turns to the blog: "she longed for other listeners, and she longed to hear the stories of others. How many other people chose silence? How many other people had been black in America? How many had felt as though their world was wrapped in gauze?" (341). With the blog, she makes space for more voices to come into the text. By eliciting personal experiences and stories about race and creating a space of free participation, Ifemelu becomes agentic in restoring voices.

Adichie emphasises the migrant's self-actualisation with Ifemelu's insistence on leaving America at the peak of her career as a blogger. She is not deterred by the financial confidence granted through her ability to confront the other on the blogosphere and other achievements that seem to suppose a successfully crossed cultural border. When she finally decides to re-cross the spatial border, one of her blog followers writes: "*I'm a bit surprised by how personal I am taking this. Good luck as you pursue the unnamed 'life change' but please come back to the blogosphere soon*" (15, emphasis in original). Ifemelu's decision echoes Anzaldúa's claim that beyond overt reasons, such as Obinze's intense emotional experiences, another factor that spurs border dwellers into the decision to resolve ambivalence "takes place underground – subconsciously [since] it is the work that the soul performs" (101). Thus, contrasting Obinze's harsh experience, Ifemelu's decision is her way of attending to what she recalls as "the cement in her soul ... a bleakness and borderlessness. [That brings] with it amorphous longing,

shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that over the months melded into a piercing homesickness” (16). Her resolve for a “*life change*” is represented through her return to Nigeria in a new consciousness. Unlike other migrant characters such as Auntie Uju and Emenike, Ifemelu and Obinze voluntarily reject the symbolic space of falsehood and ambivalence they once dwelt in.

In Ifemelu and Obinze, as well as all the migrant characters, Adichie explores the spatial and symbolic dynamism of transnational encounter. Through them, she exposes how racial borders and borderings are performed. Ifemelu and Obinze, particularly, exhibit a migration cycle that involves emigration, encounter, and return. This process is realised in a journey that takes the migrant through an initial level of encounter with racial codifications, moments of compliance, and identity erasures in order to survive as border dwellers in the unbalanced racial confluence. The second level is an inevitable unfolding that calls into consciousness a new form of desire to connect to the marginalised racial subject in an awakening that challenges racial subjugation. Lastly, is the moment of decision to either remain subjugated or be emancipated. By completing the migration cycle of Ifemelu and Obinze and establishing them as successful (or near successful) in the home space, Adichie contradicts the emigrational urgency at the beginning of the novel, which compels characters to look towards the West as the only land of hope. In Oby Okolocha’s reading, Ifemelu’s return is “a reversal of migration and of the psychology for leaving home nation” (146). As a transnational text, Adichie imagines the possibility of self-expansion beyond racial restriction and narrow-minded nationalism, in the blogosphere and the return respectively.

Adichie provides new possibilities for the agency that liberates the individual from structural subjugation. Typical of third-generation writers, she narrates the resilience and the “triumph over adversity ... [of] individuals who refused to be silenced” (Hewett 74). In the tropes of the train and border crossings (transnational and intra-national), Adichie also contradicts the single narrative in Nigeria that envisions the Western borders (American and Britain) “as passageway and guardian to liberty and freedom” (Faires 39). While *Americanah* unsettles emigrational and racial stereotypes, seeking possibilities for transracial debordering, other contemporary texts present similar resilience across social divides such as gender. In the next section, I explore how Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dancer* continues the struggle to reclaim agency in order to dismantle violent and oppressive social structures for self-emancipation.

Gendered Territories and Border Inclusivity in Chika Unigwe's *Night Dancer*

Chika Unigwe was born in Nigeria. At the age of 21 she left for Belgium, where she met and married a Belgian man. After living for eighteen years in Belgium, she immigrated to the United States, where she currently lives. Despite her years overseas, her sentiments are solidly rooted in Nigeria, her source of literary inspiration. She has written four novels, a number of short stories, and children's books. Her novel, *On Black Sisters' Street*, won the Nigeria Prize for Literature in 2012. Unigwe's importance, both in the literary and socio-political sphere, is widely acknowledged by her contemporaries. Pius Adesanmi, for instance, recognises Unigwe as one of the strong female voices in the third generation that has moved women, supposedly at the fringe during the previous generations, to the centre of Nigerian literature and modern African literature (qtd in Azuah et al. 2008). Another prominent Nigerian literary scholar, Chielozona Eze, rates Unigwe as one of the intellectually rooted third-generation writers. He states that third-generation female writers, such as Unigwe, are "historically informed about their place in their struggle to right the wrongs done to women's bodies in their cultures" (91). The epistemological standpoint of these female writers, according to Eze, reflects in how they unapologetically affirm feminism in their literary works ("Feminism with a Big 'F'" 91).

Other third-generation novels that engage construction of anti-patriarchal feminine subjectivities are Unoma Azuah's *Sky-High Flames* (2005), Lola Shoneyin's *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* (2010), Chinelo Okparanta's *Happiness, Like Water* (2013) and *Under the Udala Tree* (2015), and Ayòbámi Adébáyò's *Stay with Me* (2017). However, more than these other novels, Unigwe's mapping of her female characters along the different contours of gender topography allows an application of border poetics to her work. That being said, all of these writers, according to Eze, challenge the two main ideologies – patriarchy and capitalism – that exploit women's bodies everywhere in the world ("Feminism with a Big 'F'" 94). These ideologies condition women's movement across culturally created gender territories.

Set in Nigeria, *Night Dancer* presents the protagonist Mma, who has suddenly lost her single mother, Ezi. Though she inherited her mother's wealth, Mma resents her mother for fleeing her husband's family and her biological family, and for her promiscuity. She refuses to bury her mother properly and elaborately. We get to know about Ezi through her memoirs, addressed to her daughter, which she hands over to her in a shoebox before she dies. After the hasty burial of her mother, Mma reluctantly reads her mother's letters. Three days into reading her late mother's letters, she visits Madam Gold, her mother's best friend, who tells Mma of her mother's stubbornness and how her mother could not bring herself to continue living with her

husband Mike, who betrayed her by sleeping with their 16 year old maid, Rapu, while she was pregnant with Mma. Mma learns from Madam Gold that her mother's family also disowned her for insisting on leaving Mike, having judged her action as a cultural taboo for a woman. Obsessed with the need to validate her identity, Mma sets out to reconnect with the significant males in her life (her father and her grandfather). With the three main female characters, Rapu, Ezi, and Mma, Unigwe presents the female positionalities on the gender spectrum: the culturally accepted gender territory, the crossed border, and the borderland respectively.

With her female characters (especially Ezi and Mma), Unigwe probes dominant gender ideals and investigates the impact of territorial border crossing. She uses her female characters to expose as well as subvert the view of the gender border as mostly susceptible to invasion and phallic dominance. By emphasising the female characters, I do not overlook the male characters as a substantive aspect of the gender discourse. Rather, the male characters, especially Mike and Obi, enforce and authenticate the gender divide that Unigwe presents.

Reading Unigwe's *Night Dancer* as a gender border narrative permits a reimagining of gender as an integral part of border rethinking. I consider gender as a symbolic border, and thus examine the processes of bordering and border crossing it evokes. I envision gender as a divide in the imaginary topography along which compliant and/or resistance symbolic movements occur. Similar to other symbolic borders hitherto considered in this thesis, gender as a dividing line delineates a thickly contested boundary. The habitation and crossing of the gender boundary (especially for women) supposes inhabiting the unsafe zone and a crossing to a space of self-actualisation. Seeing gender as a border calls to mind Anzaldúa's argument that:

[b]orders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and the forbidden are its inhabitants. (25, emphasis in original)

Night Dancer, in my analysis here, narrates the intricacies of dwelling and negotiating the gender border. The text presents a nuanced representation of gendered bordering and border crossing, as well as forms of female adaptation and/or resistance to socially constructed and maintained hegemonic global capitalist and patriarchal systems. It further explores the ability of the female subjects to physically and symbolically move into "circumstances that necessitate new negotiations of self and society" (Segura and Zavella, "Gendered Borderlands" 542).

Segura and Zavella suggest that “any feminist borderlands project interrogates the multiple meanings of border and borderlands” (539), as well as seeking to “interrogate social locations within the matrix of domination to reveal the humanity and agency of the persons presented as ‘other’” (543). Hence, I consider *Night Dancer* as a typical example of feminist borderland project in its representation of gender borders, given its questioning of the structural exclusion of women.

The gender border conveys meaning and shapes identities. This is vividly seen in the text, especially in the constant reference to what “men deserve” and what women should or should not do. Unigwe establishes the cultural divide through the characterisation of Madam Gold, who embodies an admiration for the two sides of the border. Madam Gold constantly speaks of proper cultural conduct but her respectful friendship with Ezi questions her belief in what the society upholds. While she applauds Ezi’s resilience, she advises Mma against the same act saying “[w]omen cannot afford that kind of [Ezi’s] stubbornness” (10). She tells her: “[e]very man deserves a son ... Every man ... every man like ... Your father was ... a man ... Especially a man who has been as patient as your father was... I’m not saying that what he did was right. *Mba nu*. ... Any man, *nwoke obuna*, would have done the same. Would have looked elsewhere. It’s only natural” (6, ellipses in the original). Perceiving gender roles as natural emphasises their unquestionable status as social codification. And what every man deserves indirectly suggests how every woman should respond. With Madam Gold’s ambivalent position between proper cultural conduct and cultural dissidence, Unigwe keeps the status quo in the eyes of the reader, while she takes us through the process of subverting the same in Ezi and Mma.

Ezi’s stubbornness and challenging of gender codification is depicted in her venturing into what culture designates as a male world – the university (105, 184) – and ignoring her Principal’s suggestion that she studies courses such as nursing or teaching, which are considered suitable professions for women. She sees herself as one who does not measure her worth by the ease with which she gets a husband, nor her education as an asset acquired for men’s desirability (184). From the onset, therefore, Ezi signals a determination to deterritorialise the gender border; to blur the difference between male and female. She embodies a mission to transgress the border and to make social roles less gender specific. Madam Gold acknowledges this when she tells Mma: “your mother was meant to be a man ... your mother would have made a good man. She came in the wrong body. That’s all” (11). The analogy of coming “in the wrong body” underpins my later examination of what Unigwe argues through the character of Ezi.

Ezi's initial stubbornness does not last. With Mike, her determination to resist gender codification weakens. Marriage to Mike exposes a moment of self-relinquishing and yielding to cultural pressure. Her childlessness forces her to consider the cultural stereotype that defines women's "wifeliness" by reproductive ability. Her letter exposes her moment of reconnection to her own mother, whose position in the family is solidified not just by a son but by a second son: "One son is good but two makes her position unassailable. No one can question it" (47). This indicates that in the familial sphere, a woman is not only reproductively defined, but her reproductive ability is further accorded gendered validation. Consequently, when Ezi eventually becomes pregnant, she strongly desires that the child be a boy, so as to provide Mike with an heir (96-100). With these worries, she succumbs to the cultural categorisation that instrumentalises women and also relegates the female child to the background. Just like the economic and racial pressure that forces the migrant to become invisible in transnational border space, Ezi becomes a victim of societal and familial pressure that eclipses the person of the woman with an imposed functionality.

The joy of pregnancy reveals in Ezi the hidden accumulations of hurts and disgrace of not being "like the rest of women" in terms of being able to reproduce: "she thought of all those years of bumping into old friends when they always seemed to be searching for children hiding behind her, running between her knees, and eventually the old friend would ask, 'So, how many children have you got now?'" (193). In marriage, therefore, Ezi comes into what Bracha L. Ettinger explains as a moment of fragilisation in interpersonal encounter ("Psychoanalysis and Matrixial Borderspace" n.p). In marriage she accepts the cultural codifications that define women by reproduction and deference to men. She relinquishes her personal identity to the society and to her husband, who later betrays her by impregnating their maid, Rapu, and insisting on marrying her for giving birth to a son.

Night Dancer links gendered public and private spaces in Ezi, who suffers both as a woman in society and as a wife in the private space of the home. Her violation by the patriarchal cultural system moves her to cross the gender border. Once again, Madam Gold's undefined border stand comes in handy as a pointer to the expression of gender as a border: "[y]our mother was brave to take the steps she did, to walk out without looking back. Not even once. She shut the door and she never went back" (10). The imagery of taking steps, walking out, and shutting the door is typical of narrative giving form to the spatial and symbolic topography. The door suggests a material boundary between the inside and outside of the symbolic androcentric room, and a temporal boundary that demarcates the time of being inside and outside. Unigwe

invokes this mental imagery to clearly indicate the positionalities of women in society, which she challenges. Ezi, like other women, during the period of her fragilisation in marriage, is located within a closed space controlled by the system that demands consistent subservience. Thus, walking out of this symbolic room is a performance of demonstration against dominance, resonating with Anzaldua's idea of "leaving home" (21). The burden placed on Ezi by the dominance of the patriarchal society plays out in her private space, her home. She moves out of Mike's house with her three-month-old daughter, and when her family disowns her, she goes to Enugu, where she lives as an accomplished and happy woman. Freed from the constraints of the men's world, Ezi is again confronted with the challenge of constructing her femininity and motherhood as a single mother.

Rapu represents a contrast to Ezi's challenge of tradition. She aptly represents feminine complacency within hegemonic space. For Rapu, emancipation means meeting the cultural demands of gendering as a woman and gendered reproductivity as a wife. Rapu's desire to represent the cultural woman/wife is entwined with a longing to escape class relegation. She believes in the right of men to demand obedience and service from women; thus, from the day Ezi and Mike travel with her to Kaduna as their maid, she silently condemns Ezi for openly disagreeing with her husband. She recalls her home and confirms to herself that "women did not speak to their husbands like [Ezi]. If they disagreed they saved their anger and their words for when they were with their fellow women. No one she knew would complain so brazenly about their husband's family" (151). Rapu's reflection exposes Ezi as a woman on the other side of the gender border for doing that which tradition and society considers abnormal for a woman. Rapu believes that in the village or in the city, learned or illiterate, a woman has specified responsibilities, without which she is less of a woman. Thus, her spatial crossing from the village into the city does not achieve a questioning of male supremacy. The autonomy and exposure migration to the city permits do not influence her perception of her role as a woman and, eventually, as a wife. Her perception is, however, predicated by her positionality on the class spectrum; she is on the other side of the class border from Ezi. She does not have the same opportunities or choices available to Ezi because of her poverty. Therefore, one may also read her reinforcement of the gender border as conditioned by pressures of the economic borders imposed upon her.

Rapu is a symbol of unwillingness to put up resistance to patriarchal subjugation. For her, Mike's transgression of her corporeal border is not a transgression with ethical border implications, but a tolerable act. Three months into Ezi's pregnancy, Mike goes into Rapu's

room and relates sexually with her, an act he regrets but continues without Ezi's notice until Rapu's body reflects her pregnancy. Crossing into Rapu's room and sleeping with her represents invasion at two levels: physical and corporeal. Both crossings are typical masculine movements into the woman's public and private space, which symbolise dominance and intimidation (though welcomed by Rapu). This act of invading the woman's space and body brings to mind Eze's claim that "nearly all patriarchal cultures share an implicit belief that women's bodies do not belong to them. These cultures invent mores to regulate those bodies" ("Feminism with a Big 'F'" 94). In this case, Rapu is culturally indoctrinated by the belief that marriageability and gendered reproductivity verify a woman and enhance her social status.

In *Rapu*, Unigwe presents a prototype of first-generation female characters whose happiness and changed social standing are intrinsically connected to childbearing. Becoming Mike's wife and giving birth to a son raises Rapu from her position lower down on the social hierarchy, and moves her out of her class disadvantages. Significantly, her moving into Mike's house contrasts with Ezi's walking out and shutting the door. Rapu's walk into Mike's house and her compliance (as well as begetting a boy) enable a displacement of her mistress and her girl child. However, Unigwe does not free Rapu from precarity, despite her class border crossing. Despite her marriage, she remains othered and vulnerable to gender violence as she continues to live in subjected deference to Mike and constantly struggles to retain her position. Her vulnerability is further exposed in her strict relationship with her own maid, whom she keeps away from Mike, as well as her discomfort with Mma's presence when the latter reconnects with the family in Kaduna.

Examining Rapu as the antithesis of Ezi's radicalism and displacement in the familial space permits us a return to Ezi's gender border crossing and negotiation of a new consciousness in her transgressive identity. Her decision to leave Mike stems from her conviction, which she later tells her daughter: "sometimes in life, we have to take a stand. It does not help to sit on the fence, even if we have to hurt the people we love-love" (49, repetition in the original). When Mike insists on keeping Rapu due to his son, Ezi concludes that there is "no need for her to stay on in a marriage that no longer suited her just so that she could lay claim to a husband" (216). At this point of her decision, Unigwe presents a very crucial aspect of subversion that the woman battles with in order to dismantle cultural dominance: the transgenerational nurturing inherent in mothers. Unigwe presents Ezi's mother, who has come for her maternity leave, as complicit in the gender oppression. Her mother plays the role of a symbolic border

guard. She persuades Ezi against leaving her husband's house and reminds her of culture's demand for subservience in women.

Criticisms about the permeability of gender border present women, especially mothers, as guardians of cultural purity (Yuval-Davis 1997: 28-31; Yuval-Davis 2000; Abrams and Hunt 2000: 193; Schimanski 2010: 107). Nira Yuval-Davis, for instance, theorises that women are directly linked to the national formation as "biological reproducers of the 'nation'" (2000: 37). Similarly, Schimanski identifies that the "role traditionally played by women in national discourse [delineates them] as 'border guards', nurturers of language, culture and new generations" (2010: 107). Referring to this role as "intergenerational teaching", Cristina Cruz-Gutiérrez in her analysis of Unigwe's *Night Dancer* observes that this teaching gears towards "shaping young women's minds, pigeonholing their identity, and fostering quintessential notions on how to properly embody womanhood" (4). Ezi's mother assumes the border guard role against Ezi's topographical and symbolic border crossing. When Ezi insists that Mike should reject Rapu, her mother reminds her of gendered social hierarchy, where men are ranked higher than women and the boy child is valued more than the girl child. Ezi complains,

'Mama! He [Mike] slept with Rapu, Mama! Rapu my maid!' [Ezi cries]

'Yes. He's betrayed you. Stop. *O zugo*.' [Ezi's mother responds]

'And she has his baby!'

'His son! His son! And that, my dear, makes all the difference. You do not want to anger him, ooo; do not anger him because at this moment you're standing only with one leg inside the house. This Rapu has landed on both feet. You're upset now. You're angry but, my dear, after the anger, you'll have to think of how to hang on to him.'
(201-211)

Ezi's mother typifies the intergenerational effort of traditional women to internalise and uphold patriarchal ideologies in their daughters. Representing cultural oppression, she condemns Ezi on two counts: reproductivity and responsibility. First, her correction and emphasis on "son" convicts Ezi of lacking the cultural certification of proper "wifeliness". Second, the repetition of the need not to "anger him" underscores an accusation of irresponsibility and disrespect. Ezi's mother further exonerates Mike's infidelity according to the claims that every man deserves a son (210). And what the man deserves has to be provided by a woman, any woman. So, the emphasis is no longer on how man's need is satisfied and who satisfies it, but on the

fact that this desire is satisfied, such that “if Rapu had not given him [a boy], there was no way she would have been allowed back in” (210).

Topographically and symbolically dislocated, Ezi moves to Enugu in rejection of the culture that defines a woman in relation to reproduction and marriage. Standing out for her is represented by resistance to the status quo, a reclaiming of voice, and a movement away from marginality. It is refusing to remain the other but becoming oneself. Leaving “home” implies creating one’s own style. In Enugu, alone with her daughter, Ezi blurs the binary roles of gender in her new identity. She conflates in her single motherhood the responsibility of being a father and mother to her daughter. In this conflation, she also remains distanced from her daughter. Unigwe presents a total liberation of women even from the chains of childbirth and from considering the child a marital necessity. This is dissimilar to the first- and second-generation female writers, such as Nwapa and Emecheta, who hinder the total emancipation of their female characters with the female characters’ despair at childlessness or a disturbed life with their children.

In relation to her own daughter, Ezi disrupts the traditional role of women as symbolic border guards and preservers of cultural purity. She becomes what Melissa W. Wright calls a “mother-activist”, which is a different form of border guarding that checks passage into gender subservience. Wright avers, “the mother-activist ... represents the woman who, motivated by her private experience as a mother, trespasses into the public sphere” (405). Though Wright’s mother-activists are particularly political mothers whose life on the street does not suggest a loss of their homes, Ezi shares a similarity with them. She shares in their motive of taking to the public which, as Wright explains, is “seeking justice in repressive political [cultural] climate” (405-406). By challenging the gender norm that confines women to the home and to the specified performances of wifeliness and motherhood, Ezi creates a new subjectivity for herself and for her daughter.

Ezi’s commodification of her body is more an agentic avowal of her femaleness than corporeal invasion. This can be deduced from the fact that she controls her relationship with the men she sexually relates with, keeping or rejecting them according to her own satisfaction (185). Unigwe seems to borrow from Emecheta’s character, Adaku, who decided to take control of her body and become a prostitute (Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood*). However, with the character of Mma, Unigwe shows that Ezi’s agency is overdetermined. It is an imperfect and extremist effort to transcend the gender border. Her extremism is also seen in her keeping Mma completely away from her families, thereby severing the link between her and her past. She

resists telling Mma the story of her family and her father, even when this denial results in Mma's hatred for her. However, her promiscuous, wealthy, and independent life creates a tension in Mma between the woman she sees in her mother and the woman upheld by her culture.

Unlike Rapu's and Ezi's respective positionalities at the compliant and resistant sides of the gender border respectfully, Mma represents the interstice on the gender spectrum: the borderland. At first, she is located at the borderland between what tradition demands and the model she receives from her mother. She is also at the borderland between the public and the private, society and her individuality. Whereas Ezi does not fully realise a true debordering, Mma develops to realise that dream. She becomes a new frontier of de-bordering that includes the other.

Belonging Without Exclusion

Unigwe is very particular about Mma's process of gender bordering, taking her through subservience, ambivalence, and finally to self-assertion that, unlike that of Rapu and Ezi, is all inclusive. Similar to her fictive strategies in her other novels – making women's deaths regenerative – Unigwe begins a process of Mma's gender border crossing with the death of her mother. In her award-winning novel, *On Black Sisters' Street*, Unigwe exemplifies the reformatory effect of women's deaths. *On Black Sisters' Street* tells the ordeal of four girls trafficked into prostitution and the untold corporeal invasion and dehumanisation they endured. These girls are silenced and caged by the system that controls and exploits their bodies, humanity, and dignity. However, the brutal death of one of them (Sisi), at the hands of her sexual employer, ignites a bond in the remaining three girls who henceforth open up to one another their pathetic life stories, and start hatching plans for their escape from the bondage of sexual slavery. In his discussion of *On Black Sisters' Street*, Eze refers to Sisi's death as "cathartic as well as catalytic" in reference to its effect on the other three girls ("Feminism with a Big 'F'" 98). They felt the importance of their own bodies and the need to liberate them. What Eze said about Sisi's death applies to Ezi and Mma. Ezi's death and letters initiate a change in Mma. Her death sets off in Mma a border crossing at many levels: physical, epistemological, and symbolic.

Having repaid her mother with a shabbily organised burial for severing her from her past, Mma seeks her mother's families with a bottle of brandy, a cultural symbol of repentance. Her physical border crossing from Enugu (the symbolic space of independence) to Aba and

Kaduna, as she seeks to be integrated into the families of her grandfather and her father, is a motif for reverse gender crossing into cultural dominance. Her action underscores an initial moment of bowing to cultural pressure. For instance, she lacks the courage to challenge her partner Obi when he refuses to allow her to visit his parents with the excuse of her paternal obscurity. Obi shuns her “[d]on’t be silly Mma. Who would I say you are?” (27). Obi’s question shows a denial of Mma’s mother and by extension a disavowal of the women in the cultural system, where verification of identity is patricentric. So, seeking reconciliation is a response to the pressure for identity verification, attainable by affiliating oneself to a family – her mother’s father and the family she desires with Obi.

She reconnects with her grandfather and his family and sets off to Kaduna to meet her father. In her father’s house she encounters Rapu. Faced with Rapu’s actions and her father’s revelations, she discovers that her mother sought to come back but was rejected by her father, who preferred a son to her. Mma realises that Ezi’s actions are “deeper than [betrayal]. It was her way of challenging tradition. It was one woman taking on her world” (114) and as Madam Gold affirms, “[Ezi] was not like the rest of us. We ... we are more pliable” (102). By this realisation, she epistemologically crosses from the known to the unknown, from unconsciousness to consciousness. She enters a new consciousness that questions her stand at the borderland. Ironically, therefore, her seeking of a reunion inversely initiates her walking away from “home”. It initiates a walking away from the self that desires cultural verification. One may rightly say that Mma’s resolution of her liminal position (that is, her epistemological and symbolic crossing) is initiated by her mother’s letters. The letters are umbilical objects that not only connect her to her mother but also that initiate her crossing into the symbolic gender space occupied by her mother. They lead her to more knowledge about her mother’s resilience, initiate a topographical crossing to unveil more family secrets and finally achieve in her a remembering of the past and re-membering with her mother and family.

Mma accepts her mother’s resilience and crosses the gender border when she leaves her father’s house, returns to her independence in Enugu, and finally decides to become her mother’s daughter. Her walking away from her father’s house is different from her mother’s walking away. Unlike her mother’s, Mma’s walking away is not a turning back on the family (the men) she has discovered. She goes back to her independent life in Enugu but she remains in communication with her family. Her walking away is, therefore, an expression of agency against the dominance of patriarchal culture that validates the woman by the masculine presence. Reconsidering this validation which she initially requires from her boyfriend, Obi,

she tells him: “I am coming home as soon as all this [Kaduna riot] is settled. I’ve decided to build my mother’s house I am my mother’s daughter” (260-261). And when Obi proposes to take her to his parents since the obscurity about her paternity is cleared, she insists:

‘They have to know whose daughter I am.’

‘Of course. They will have to meet your father, too. I know that!’ [Obi replies]

‘They have to know about my mother too, Obi.’ (261)

The linguistic marker “too” in the above conversation presupposes an inclusion. Here, Mma differs from the other female characters. She contrasts with Rapu, who tolerates self-erasure in constructing her emancipation. She equally contradicts her mother’s extreme radicalism and gender construction that excludes the underprivileged and the masculine. Mma’s acceptance of Obi’s proposal in the conversation above is all inclusive - Obi, her father, her mother, and herself. By constructing a new being without boundaries, Mma embodies the spirit of African communitarianism, replicated in the Igbo adage that says “*Egbe bere Ugo bere*” (live and let live), which is the Igbo understanding of justice and equality. She is a deconstructive tool in Unigwe’s hand that challenges the fixity of borders. With Mma, Unigwe establishes that all boundaries are artificial and that what matters is humanity and fairness. By problematising and interrogating the locations of marginal identities, especially women in patriarchal Nigerian society, Unigwe achieves a re/presentation of the female subjectivities as agentic for social change and gender border inclusivity.

The concluding part of *Night Dancer*, a very outstanding scene of the historic Kaduna religious crisis, depicts a typical religious border problem in Nigeria. The crisis begins with Muslims’ rejection of Nigeria’s hosting of Miss World 2002 in Kaduna, a Muslim-dominated city in the northern part of Nigeria. The crisis escalates to interreligious violence when a Christian journalist writes that the beauty of the contestants is such that even Mohammed would probably desire to marry one of them. This sparks a religious conflict between the Muslims and the Christians. The scene is a pointer to the existing form of borders in Nigeria. Incidentally, this scene helps us to move on to the issue of religious borders, which I will be discussing in the next section.

Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday* and the Poetics of Religious Borders and Extremism

Elnathan John is a third-generation Nigerian novelist, satirist, and lawyer residing in Berlin, Germany. His literary contributions include fiction, non-fiction, and short stories. His latest publication is a satire collection titled *Be(com)ing Nigerian* (2019). Two of his short stories – “Bayan Layi” and “Flying” – were shortlisted for the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2013 and 2015 respectively. Born and raised in the northern part of Nigeria, John's experience of religious crisis influences his writing and enhances its persuasiveness. The details he brings into his works, his debut novel *Born on a Tuesday* (2015) in particular, is a form of persuasion that renders the religious insurgency in Nigeria visible. He has acknowledged in interviews that his novel is not only a description of a fictional event, but also “a reality that [he] consider[s] very important and in danger of remaining in the shadows of two-minute news items about insurgent attacks” (Jackson and Suhr-Sytsma, “Interview with Elnathan John” 92). John generally engages Nigeria's political and religious terrain in order to expose, amongst others, the ills of adverse religious borders and fundamentalism.

Written in *bildungsroman* style, *Born on a Tuesday* is set amidst the inception of the Haqiqiy and Mujahideen radical religious movements and the Shiite/Sunni conflict in Nigeria. The first-person point of view of thirteen-year-old Dantala guides our perspective on authoritarian religion and its diminishing effects on individual identity. Dantala, an *almajiri*³³, tells the story of his experience at the regimented Islamic school far from home with little economic support from his family. In a bid to survive, Dantala joins the street boys, named the ‘Kuka Tree’ boys, headed by Banda at Bayan Layi. Street boys are used by politicians to disrupt elections. On one such occasion of political rioting, they are hired by the Small Party to burn the headquarters of the opposition party and the police get involved. The police kill Banda and many of the boys as they flee to save their lives. Dantala survives the police attack and ends up in Sokoto (12-18). The narrative shift to Sokoto presents a different level of crisis, a religious crisis, which is my main focus in this section. In Sokoto, Dantala is entangled in the religious conflict that exists between Sheikh Jamal, who recruits him as a disciple, and the Sheikh's deputy, Malam Abdul-Nur.

³³ Children sent to Islamic school receive an informal education. They are disciples of a Malam whose mentorship they imbibe until they are grown enough to branch off and start their own Islamic school. This system of education has been in existence in Nigeria since the 11th century.

While the Sheikh heads an Islamic movement that encourages tolerance and love for Western education, Abdul-Nur founds a radical group, the Mujahideen (a literary equivalence of Boko Haram) which disrupts and opposes Sheikh Jamal's teaching. Abdul-Nur's intolerance leads to intra-religious clashes and the subsequent beheading of Sheikh Jamal. Trapped in the interstices of religious conflict, Dantala navigates his identity as a Muslim, a child, and a human being. Similar intra-religious friction exists between the Sunnis, to which most of the Muslims including Dantala belong, and the Shiites to which his three brothers have converted to. Between these religious groups, John exposes an intolerance that results from unguarded fundamentalism and an unfounded mentality of superiority.

Born on a Tuesday is the first published fiction that relates to the inception of Boko Haram. It is one of the very few novels on the general topic of religious extremism in Nigeria, others of which include Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani's *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree* (2018), and Helon Habila's non-fiction, *The Chibok Girls* (2016). *Purple Hibiscus* presents the child-narrator as a victim of her father's determination to maintain a strict divide between Christianity and African Religious Tradition. In *Buried Beneath the Baobab Tree*, Nwaubani, very much like John, chronicles the horrid experiences of the over two hundred girls kidnapped by Boko Haram insurgents on the fourteenth of April 2014. However, more than these other novels, *Born on a Tuesday* narratively represents the details of the inception and operation of religious insurgency. It "paint[s] a more complex picture of Nigeria's religious landscape than the one to which most international readers have access" (Jackson and Suhr-Sytsma 90). It exposes the reality of extremism in religious belief and the effect it has on vulnerable members of the society, in this case, the child, who struggles to be and to live in this chaotic space. The novel presents the instrumentalization of children in the restive dynamics of religious bordering, which is John's way of giving a face to the faceless and presenting the anonymous to the world. This section, therefore, explicates the processes of religious bordering and the adverse effects of bordering on characters.

Historically, religious borders and their attendant conflicts have existed for centuries. Between the fifteenth and the sixteenth century intra-religious conflicts, such as the Protestant Reformation and the historical revolts of religious reformers who challenged the medieval Church, resulted in a multiplicity of Christian churches which have continued to split and proliferate, primarily on the basis of religious disagreement. In the Islamic world too, the ideological conflict of the seventh century split the Islamic religion into two major sects – the Sunnis and the Shiites. Though other sects have emerged over the course of time, the Sunnis

and the Shiites have continued to hold tenaciously on to opposing beliefs regarding the true successor to the prophet Mohammed.

Increasing intolerance of religious differences has recently become a greater challenge to global peace and stability. Nigeria, in particular, faces a larger proportion of this challenge because of the interwoven nature of religion with politics and ethnicity. Politicization of religion has been part of Nigeria since the colonial era. But since the realization of independence in 1960, the litany of religious crises which has besieged the nation seems to be on the increase. Mashood Omotosho observes that the issue of religion as a critical dividing factor came to the fore of Nigerian politics at the end of military rule in 1999. He thus blames democratic politics for providing “a perfect platform for corrupt and cynical politicians to play on religious fears to gain votes” (Omotosho 137). Omotosho gives a detailed account of the inter-religious crises³⁴ that have accelerated since the democratic takeover in 1999 (137-42). Some of these crises are attributable to divisive government policies, such as the introduction of the Sharia penal code by the then Zamfara State governor, which was perceived by Christians as a strategic means of Islamising the nation. According to John in his interview, religion “has become more important in secular life and politics with the increasing dysfunctionality of the Nigerian state” (Jackson and Suhr-Sytsma 91). Religious crises expose the complexity and intricacies of religion in the Nigerian political landscape. In the life of the nation as a whole, it becomes a border between people, along which belonging is violently negotiated.

Unlike *Americanah* and *Night Dancer*, where the negotiation of identity results in self-assertion and a rejection of formerly accepted falsehood, in *Born on a Tuesday* identity negotiation leads to destruction of both the self and the other. The restive border in this novel has a restricting effect on the characters and on the society whose peace and security depends on the continuous psychosomatic balance in individual lives, especially those of children, who are its future. Given the ages of Dantala and the other child characters who are the central characters, my discussion will focus on the effect of adverse religious divide on the child, but can also be extrapolated to any individual at risk of religious victimisation. With this in mind, I contend that religious extremism is a form of the codified divide that exploits the vulnerability of the

³⁴ Some inter-religious crises in Nigeria are the twenty-first February 2000 Kaduna anti-Sharia crisis with a record of over 1000 dead; the twenty-eighth February reprisal attack in Aba with the killing of hundreds of Muslims; the 2001 Middle-Belt religious riot with more than 1000 casualties; the 2004 Jos crisis caused by the allegation that Fulani herdsmen smuggled heavy arms into the city, resulting in the burning of churches and mosques and many casualties; the May 2004 reprisal attack by Christians in Kano; the 2006 religious crisis resulting from the Danish cartoons of Prophet Mohammed; and numerous Boko Haram insurgencies which started in July 2009 in Yobe, Kano, and Borno State (Omotosho 137-42).

child, making him/her physically and psychologically unfit. I posit that victimisation of the child is repercussive, as it enacts an endless return of traumatised children in a cycle of violence.

Religious Borders and the Instrumentalisation of the Child

Born on a Tuesday presents the child as a critical member of the universal human family, whose rights and privileges need to be meticulously guarded for generational continuity and global peace. By showing the endangered lives of Dantala, Banda, Jibril, Dantala's brothers, Alhaji Usman's son, and the Kuka Tree boys – who are differently conditioned to believe that there is an enemy in the “them” who do not share the same religious/political belief as the “us” – the text provides close insight into the person of the child as a border dweller at the point where religious beliefs intersect. John's focalisation of Dantala progresses through a shift from home to the street. This forced border crossing from the homestead to the anonymity of the street sets the stage for the text's engagement with borders and crossings. Denied full parental and civic care, Dantala finds solace with the Kuka tree boys – products of the same dysfunctional society. With the Kuka tree boys, led by Banda, he is introduced to life as a street boy:

I followed Banda and he gave me the first wee-wee I ever smoked. It felt good. My legs became light and after a while, I felt them disappear. I was floating, my eyes were heavy, and I felt bigger and stronger than Banda and Gobedanisa and all the boys under the Kuka tree. (7)

In the street, Dantala finds the care and affection, though elusive, denied to him by his family. His loss of sense of pity and emotion, which begins with his early separation from the family, increases with his initiation into gangsterism and political thuggery. His ruthless life on the street provides a surrogate family for him, but deprives him of his innocence. He recalls the delight he takes in inflicting harm on other children of different ethnoreligious backgrounds who fall into the trap of the dreaded street boys: “I like sharp objects when beating a thief. I like the way the blood spurts when you punch ... I grabbed a long nail and pierce his head many times, demanding his real name” (4). Michael Wyness, an expert in childhood studies, asserts that the street as ‘peer network’ not only serves as a space of belonging for the child, but also as an agent for easy recruitment of children in moments of political and religious crisis (Zack-Williams 78; Wyness 351). This is typical of the availability of these boys to the political parties (the Big Party and the Small Party in the novel) in Bayan Layi during elections.

Recruited as tools for political violence, Dantala and the other boys are enticed and forced to inflict harm on political opponents. Political divides and conflict between the Small Party and the Big Party become political territories into which the children are forced, to the utter neglect of their wellbeing. Banda, for instance, continues to work for the Small Party even when his health deteriorates. He stands guard at the polling stand to ensure a rigged election in favour of the Small Party and, while he does this, he constantly steps aside to “cough, holding his chest ... [and] spitting a lot of blood” (11). Referring to the objectification of the street boys by politicians, Soyinka holds that the children’s vulnerability makes them available to the politicians. He discloses that most of these politicians “are highly placed, highly disgruntled, and thus highly motivated individuals who, having lost out in the power stakes, resort to the manipulation of these products of warped fervor” (n.p). Other critics agree that the impoverishment and socio-economic hardship in the country (and mostly in the northern part of the country) contributed to the rise of political and religious extremism that makes the child “easy prey” in the hands of political and religious demagogues (Adesoji, “Between Maitatsine and Boko Haram” 106; Akinola 12).

The second part of the text features a major topographical border crossing from Bayan Layi to Sokoto. More than the political scenario in Bayan Layi, Sokoto presents a tension that hinders self-actualisation and belonging. In this space, Dantala, Jibril (who is forced by his uncle Abdul-Nur to come to Sokoto), and the other religious child-recruits struggle psychologically with a form of indoctrination that denies the right to individual expression. Abdul-Nur establishes his own radical religious group in opposition to Sheikh Jamal and the liberal Muslims. He indoctrinates Jibril and his child-recruits in the belief that those on the other side of the religious divide, those who do not believe in his radicalism, are headed for damnation unless they are converted or eliminated. He encourages them to “stand up and fight against the government ... and to burn all the drinking places and the mosques of those who are not agreeing with [them] ... he says that those who work for this government are working for Shaitan and are making themselves enemies of Islam” (97). Dantala is terribly troubled by Abdul-Nur’s lethal aversion to Western education, which is in stark opposition to Sheikh Jamal, who is a beneficiary of Western education.

Abdul-Nur’s radical group is a representation of Boko Haram’s inception in Nigeria and its recruitment strategies. He enforces radical exclusion by taking his child-recruits away from society to his camp on the remote outskirts of the city. By withdrawing to the remote outskirts (just like Bukuru in Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain*), he makes the children live in “double

peripherality” – marginalised symbolically and geographically (Newman, “Borders and Bordering” 179). In this secluded space, he inscribes a mark on the children’s laps and makes the children relinquish their phones (208). He thus secludes them from society and makes their lives unaccounted for. Inscribing a mark on them symbolises forced identification with a given religious belief and space. It is an imposition that cannot be challenged, because of the vulnerability of the child. According to Jibril, Malam Abdul-Nur “shot someone in the thigh who was caught trying to leave the premises. ‘He even has a little cell, where he keeps people who have committed offences’ He [makes us] swear not to tell anyone” (195). This produces a scenario analogous to the consequences of child soldiering:

Millions of them have been killed, disabled, orphaned, sexually abused, recruited as soldiers, separated from the families and friends, denied the support of the community in which they lived and have been exposed to a high degree of risk of disease, psychological problems and malnutrition. They have been totally denied the charm of being children for no fault of theirs. (Vijayakumar 168)

Religious seclusion and maltreatment cause enormous damage to the selfhood and the psyche of the character. Frank Faulkner notes that “removal of basic necessities and protective mechanisms ensures that children are particularly vulnerable to all manner of influences, most notably where the family unit has been fragmented or destroyed completely in the chaos and confusion of war” (495). Abdul-Nur’s spatial and emotional seclusion of the child recruits from families, relatives, friends, and the community exacerbates the vulnerability of Jibril and the other children. Seclusion creates a traumatising sense of entrapment at the borderland.

The feeling of entrapment is exemplified in Jibril, who relates to Dantala how trapped he feels within Abdul-Nur’s camp, and how distorted his self has become with Abdul-Nur forcing them to take a definite side in religious bordering, to become insurgents, and to shoot and kill the “unbeliever” (208). The camp is both a physical bordering from the city, but also more significantly is the psychological border created by the entrapment of the children in a separated geographical space. This separation from the city, from the others, introduces fear that results in identity distortion. The first reaction to this entrapment is to escape, but this reaction is threatened with death (127-28). Religious entrapment recalls the inescapable political enslavement of the children at the beginning of the novel. Jibril’s tension in the insurgent camp reminds us of Dantala’s feelings as a political thug. Keeping Dantala in telephone communication with Jibril is the author’s way of connecting the two geographical territories and emphasising the intricate relationship between political and religious conflict.

Dantala and the other recruited children suffer on both the physical and psychological levels. By moving away from the family into the street and into the hands of the divisive political and religious leaders, the child's chance of encountering non-extremist narratives is reduced. John Sawicki argues that the indoctrination of the child would be hindered if there were "competing narrative from family members or others" (42). But here, dysfunctional family structures deprive Dantala, Jibril, and the other children of the opportunity of counter-narratives, narratives that expose religious division and radicalism for what they really are – deadly. Psychologically, too, they are dehumanised and exploited as objects for violent destruction, and the girls among them double as sexual objects. Any resistance on their part is met with brutal punishments or outright death. Thus, trapped in the world of the extremist religious leaders, they become an object of destruction and an instrument for managing the religious border.

Faulkner's analysis of the plight of child soldiers in Sierra Leone is applicable to what becomes of the child recruits in their negotiation of the religious border as fanatics or insurgents. Faulkner believes that "as a result of sustained and orchestrated brutalization, these children have turned into some of the most vicious and inhumane killers at the disposal of various factions" (499). Sawicki contends that the child's fractional understanding of death makes him susceptible to being used as an agent of destruction of life and property (42). The fragility of children's minds and their inability to offer physical resistance make them susceptible to a form of violent indoctrination that turns them into monsters, killers, and bombers. The four youths from Abdul-Nur's camp who kill the Sheikh by brutally beheading him, laying him on the ground, and gradually cutting his throat until he dies (222) typify the extent to which religious extremism can destroy the individual. Religious extremism distorts the psyche, resulting in total physical, emotional, and societal dysfunction.

In response to the dysfunction caused by constant subjugation to religious brutality, the child develops a tendency towards destruction, including self-destruction. As stated earlier, unlike *Americanah* and *Night Dancer*, whose characters achieve a successful crossing of the socially constructed border, characters in *Born on a Tuesday* do not attain self-emancipation. Rather, their resistance of the border results in self-distortion and destruction. Their intrapersonal brokenness results in the inescapable return of repressed traumatic experiences in the form of brutality and destruction. Dantala, Jibril, and the child recruits are disconnected from that which is human in the self or the other. As they negotiate their identity through victimhood arising from being caught in between fanatic religious territories, they resist or in some cases

seek revenge against the fanatic that has caused their destruction. For instance, Sale, who is one of Abdul-Nur's Mujahideen child recruits, is the one who leads the soldiers to the place where Abdul-Nur is hiding (249). His 'betrayal', which is a form of revenge, is Sale's way of taking out his brokenness on his perpetrator.

In Dantala and the others, therefore, religious oppression and denial of voice creates a psychological space tumultuous with forces that suggest compliance and resistance. Much goes on in the child's physical and emotional prison as he/she metamorphoses into an insurgent. Realising the enormity of power to destroy which they wield as armed insurgents, the children become agents of mass destruction, destroying both the self and the other. According to Soyinka "some come to realize that they have been programmed, used, abused, and discarded. Now they seek to exercise power and have turned on all, members and appeasers alike" (n.p.). Continued neglect and abuse of the child on grounds of religious extremism and fanaticism has resulted in the increase of children whose lives have become a threat to national unity and wellbeing, due to their engagement in electoral rigging, religious riots, killings, and suicide bombing. The process of negotiating identity in the tense religious border changes them from violated to violators, from victims to perpetrators of violence.

Cathy Spatz Widom who tested the hypothesis of the cycle of violence in abused children and reveals that "abused and neglected children have a higher likelihood of arrests for delinquency, adult criminality, and violent criminal behaviour" (162). A similar finding is upheld by Kenneth A. Dodge, John E. Bates, and Gregory S. Pettit when they categorically state that "the experience of physical abuse in early childhood is a risk marker for the development of chronic aggressive behaviour patterns" (1682). Widom's definition of physical abuse as "cases in which an individual had 'knowingly and willfully inflicted unnecessarily severe corporal punishment' or 'unnecessary physical suffering' upon a child or children" is explicitly manifest in the camp where Abdul-Nur trains his child-recruits (162). His lethal threats are wilful infliction of harm and instrumentalisation of the child.

Societal negligence of religious oppression and instrumentalisation, if left unchecked, leaves society at the mercy of insurgents, especially children, who become unrecognisable and distorted citizens. The rate at which state and non-state negligence, especially in Nigeria's case, has contributed to children as foot soldiers who have matured "on the taste of blood" is alarming. According to Soyinka, the child's abnormal maturity in the insurgency is perceptible also in his/her "graduation" from the use of "knives and machetes, bows and poisoned arrows ... to AK-47s, homemade bombs, and explosive-packed vehicles" (n.p.). Jeffrey William

Lewis, a researcher on international security issues and suicide bombings, observes that of the 151 attacks carried out in 2015 by Boko Haram in Nigeria, roughly twenty per cent were carried out by teenagers or children (17). On the 18th of June, 2019, BBC news stated that children are used in suicide bombing in Nigeria³⁵. According to the UN Children Charity, as the news states, “Two girls and a boy carried out the bombing outside a video hall in Konduga village in north-eastern Borno State” that resulted in the death of 30 people and the injury of another 40. Making reference to similar incidents in the previous year, it confirms that 48 children were used as human bombers. This is an alarming statistic that requires urgent attention if the nation’s future, assured in its youth, is to be salvaged.

To break the cycle of violence into which religious division and extremism have cast the abused child, and to achieve global, national, and personal peace and security, there is a need for concerted efforts that look beyond borders. Though the possibility of a single religion is unattainable due to distinct individual and group ideologies, religious tolerance is achievable. John articulates the necessity of striving for a common humanity in the event of the cholera (182-185). The outbreak of cholera in the villages surrounding Sokoto city claims many lives, from the villages’ heads to the most vulnerable. Without any serious response from the government the people in the city, irrespective of religion and belief, organise themselves into volunteers. They contribute and deliver relief materials to the victims. They also circulate leaflets and talk to the villagers about basic hygiene.

Though this incident seems to be a small event in terms of the broader picture of the narrative, it carries a significant weight in relation to the theme of de-bordering and inclusivity. First, reference to the villages as surrounding the city creates a mental picture of centre-periphery dichotomy, a topographical and symbolic border between the civility of the city and the remoteness of the village. Dantala narrates their preference to drive to the village with the Hilux van in order not to feel the bad roads through which they could access the village as they go to deliver their aids (184). Secondly, the cholera outbreak in the villages is a threat to the city, presenting a possible subversion of power. The periphery, infected by deadly disease, becomes a threat to the centre, unless concerted effort is made to combat the disease. The safety of the city, therefore, is dependent on the health and wellbeing of the villages. The relationship between the city and the village emphasises the adult-child and society-individual difference

³⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48674014>

in the novel. John seems to communicate that the extent of the wellness and emancipation of the child/individual is the extent to which society is safe.

John therefore metaphorically presents religious fanaticism as societal cholera, terribly detrimental to the individual's psyche, identity, and integral development, as well as harmful to society. This cholera incident resonates with Albert Camus' representation of the ravages of the plague and the triumph of common struggle against evil and suffering in *The Plague*. Camus acknowledges through his priest character that "working side by side for something that unites us... it's the only thing that matters" (203), the only authentic option for common humanity. Similarly, by his representation of the concerted and borderless attention given to the combating of cholera, John presents the need to forgo divisions and differences for the common good. He seems to agree with Camus that human beings ought to identify their commonalities, which include facing and fighting any form of symbolic plague. The plague in the contemporary Nigerian condition that John addresses is religious extremism.

With the representation of the destructive effect of extremism, John foregrounds the need for every religious group to delink from the mentality of superiority and accept the relativity of morality and truth. He advocates the need for a change in viewpoint that allows seeing the other and the other's belief from a positive perspective. In some of his characters, John captures the approach to religious tolerance and border bridging. Dantala's mother, Umma, for instance, advises Dantala to accept and take care of his brothers who have been converted to and are instrumentalised by the opposing Islamic group, the Shiites. Umma emphasises a form of acceptance that goes beyond mere tolerance to a deeper understanding that his brothers – just like any human being who professes a different belief – "are not bad people ... They are surviving the way they know how, like [him]" (109). This acceptance, rooted in a concrete understanding of the other, is the approach that enables religious border bridging, especially in Nigeria where the multiplicity of religion is fundamentally based in judgments that frame the other as excluded from the parameters of morality. Religious acceptance creates a safe space free of the indoctrination that leads to self-destruction and is a crossing out of violence and instability.

Conclusion

Americanah, *Night Dancer*, and *Born on a Tuesday* expose socially constructed borders and the processes of encounter, negotiation, and crossing at the border. Each of these novels situates the individual in a space of indoctrination performed by the social structure itself through a

representation of the structure or those who have become victims of the pressures of the structure. In *Americanah*, the transnational encounter involves conscious and unconscious translation of the demands for survival. Ifemelu and Obinze are constantly reminded by the other migrants of the dos and don'ts of the racialised Western space as the condition for survival on the border. *Night Dancer* presents similar structural or intergenerational indoctrination as the only condition for survival. However, typical of the third-generation instinct to liberate the individual from the slavery of stereotypes, capitalism, and patriarchy, Adichie and Unigwe construct individuals imbued with the ability to negotiate structural and human pressure in order to assert themselves. These individuals take a stand against marginalisation and border exclusivity. Furthermore, while Ifemelu and Ezi personify total rebordering that is exclusionary (Ifemelu leaves America completely and Ezi disconnects finally from her marital and biological families), Obinze and Mma exemplify a rebordering that is inclusive. When Obinze returns to Nigeria and becomes financially successful, he extends an opportunity of empowerment to Nigel, a young English co-worker in one of the companies he worked for in England. He employs Nigel as his manager in Nigeria. Similarly, Mma's epistemological and symbolic border crossing from gender subservience to self-assertion does not exclude the significant male figures in her life. She asserts herself by insisting that the process of marriage, which is a major patriarchal tradition, can only hold when it includes her mother. *Born on a Tuesday*, very much like *Americanah* and *Night Dancer*, exposes a form of indoctrination of the individual, this time into a religiously codified territory. However, indoctrinated individual(s), unlike in the other two texts, are entangled in a more complex process of negotiating self that ends in the destruction of both the self and the other. The complexity of self-negotiation in *Born on a Tuesday* reflects the increased vulnerability of the child.

Distortion of identity for the characters in these novels is discomfiting and therefore evokes the challenge to re-cross borders. The desire to re-cross, either physical borders (as in *Americanah*) or symbolic borders (as in *Night Dancer*), or both (as for the secluded insurgent child recruits in Elnathan John's *Born on a Tuesday*), is sometimes intensified by natal traces; a reconnection to one's root or home. Ifemelu feels "the cement in her soul ... a bleakness and borderlessness. [That brings] with it amorphous longing, shapeless desires, brief imaginary glints of other lives she could be living, that over the months melded into a piercing homesickness" (16). Mma's mother's death was catalytic to her physical, epistemological, and symbolic border crossing. Dantala in *Born on a Tuesday* also remembers his mother, Umma,

as he struggles with the loss of selfhood due to the inexplicable brutality of Malam Abdul-Nur, who forces religion on the children.

By the representation and condemnation of structural exclusion, third-generation Nigerian writers advocate a reawakening of consciousness of the dignity of the human person and the inalienable right to equality and freedom. In his advocacy for free movement and abode within Africa for Africans, Achille Mbembe acknowledges: “I am one of those who are actively committed to a borderless Africa” (*Mail & Guardian* n.p). Although Mbembe is referring specifically to South Africa, in reaction to the prevalent xenophobic crisis, his advocacy nonetheless resonates with the more general global need to reinstate the human person above spatio-cultural segregation. The three novels examined in this chapter present racial, gender, and religious fixity as anti-human since such structures enforce erasure and invisibility on the individual person. The novels propose a radical delinking from the matrix of superiority and a debordering that includes and respects every human person – the woman, the man, and the child.

CHAPTER FIVE

Towards Border Inclusivity

The extent to which I am prepared to overcome my feelings of exclusivity will determine the extent to which I am prepared to permit you to cross the border and to interact with me.

Newman, “Borders and Bordering” 177

In this thesis, I sought to establish the following: first, that the ‘here-there’ and ‘us-them’ symbolic split, similar to the traditional notion of territorial lines, function as borders which form strong divides between individuals and groups. Secondly, that symbolic borders are fluid and complex forms of intervention in social life. Thirdly, that at the points of intersection of symbolic borders, multiple exchanges and crossings (physical, psychological, and corporeal) occur between the individuals and territories that are divided by social constructs. To discuss these assertions, the study embarked on a critical analysis of fictional characters’ negotiation of identity at the intersection of the socially defined territories of tradition, ethnicity, class, race, gender, and religion. Using the framing methodological tool of historicisation, I examined the processes of dwelling, crossing, and re-crossing different topographical and social boundaries particular to the three generations of Nigerian literature, and how these boundaries are entangled. Among other things, my introductory chapter explicated the controversy surrounding literary categorisation in Nigeria. Despite the indeterminacy of literary categorisation and based on its functional understanding, situating the novels historically and discussing them chronologically captures the trajectory of symbolic difference in the Nigerian history. It reveals an ongoing process of the socially and politically constructed borders and thus calls attention to their effect on national cohesion and integral development of the human person.

The selection of primary novels was guided by the focal concerns of the three generations of literary writing in Nigeria. The novels selected to represent the three generations – Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Chukwuemeka Ike’s *Sunset at Dawn* (1976), Festus Iyayi’s *Violence* (1979) and Okey Ndibe’s *Arrows of Rain* (2000), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Americanah* (2013), Chika Unigwe’s *Night Dancer* (2012) and Elnathan John’s *Born on a Tuesday* (2016) – approximate historical realities in their fictional portrayal of the border situation and their impact on the characters, who struggle to negotiate and construct their

identities at the respective symbolic borders. They portray the historicity of social difference, the lived experience of culture, and social distinctions in different periods of Nigerian literary history from the colonial era to the present.

Furthermore, my thesis shows that grouping Nigerian literary writings along historical thematic concerns allows for the application of analytical lenses such as border poetics. Hence, I examined imaginative representations of bordered identities from the perspective of border poetics, using the constituent notions of borders and bordering. Examining these novels as border and border crossing narratives accords with Shameem Black's definition of a border crossing narrative. For Black, a border crossing narrative "foregrounds dissonance between subject and object of representation; second, it seeks to surmount these productions of social difference" (3). The ideas of subject-object difference and the struggle to overcome social difference are clearly evident in the novels – both primary and secondary – examined in this thesis. The novels show that "inhabiting a world unlike one's own requires crossing of barriers shaped by sharp inequalities of material and social power" (Black 7).

The novel form, in contrast to drama and poetry, seemed most appropriate for this research. The novel's unique ability to animate social locations makes it more amenable to border studies. The novel's fidelity to lived experience in all its dimensions, and close attention to the social and historical contexts that individuals need to negotiate in daily life, provides the novel with a unique capacity to animate some of the central concerns of border studies – in particular, the complex interaction between lived experience, individual interiority, and the larger systemic and material environments that govern collective identities. It personifies and personalises the abstract, enabling the reader an epistemological crossing into the space of the characters. In the process of this crossing, narrative prose stretches the boundaries of the reader's ethical imagination and judgement. *Arrows of Rain* and *Violence*, for instance, make it easy to relate to the pains of unemployment and the trauma of transgressed bodies because of the vividness of the characters, the textured evocation of cityscapes, and engaging plotlines. In these texts, we encounter a physical and symbolic movement of characters along the spectrum of social territories. This movement, from privileged to deprived spaces and vice versa, is conditioned and propelled by need. In the contact of bodies and memories, and in the everyday human labour that is a tangible part of the township, city, or transnational network highlighted by the novels, hegemonic structures that require debordering become visible.

Border poetics engages insights from theoretical orientations such as postcolonialism, Marxism and feminism, as it accounts for the process of dwelling at and crossing physical and imaginary

borders. While each of these theoretical orientations may attend to a strand of the divide as its data for analysis – feminism on the feminine-masculine difference, Marxism on class difference, and postcolonialism on coloniser-colonised dichotomy – border poetics provides an umbrella theory that has the potential to bring them together. By attending to what Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan call “metaphorical borderlands of hegemonic and minority identities” (2), border poetics makes room for an interdisciplinary discussion.

The use of border poetics as the theoretical framework for textual analysis of failed or successful crossings in narratives of bordering was crucial to my study. It provided conceptual tools such as bordering, debordering, rebordering, and border crossing, which were used envisioning the processual aspect of the border. These concepts were applied in examining the processes of characters’ affiliation to symbolic spaces and the intertwined relationship between the symbolic and the material spaces that characters occupy. Thus, the novels were read alongside the strategies that inform border formation and border permeability to ascertain how social structures divide people into defined groups and the powers that sustain these forms of exclusivity. Within these bordering processes, we can discover characters’ identity negotiations in a struggle either to retain or relinquish selfhood in response to social border pressures. In other words, this study has attempted to identify the effect of social structures (borders) on the self and the consequent manifestation in compliant or resistant behaviour.

In Chapter Two, I examined the tension that characterises the in-between spaces of tradition and ethnicity. I chose *Things Fall Apart* and *Sunset at Dawn* from the first generation of Nigerian writing because of the seminal nature of the texts – *Things Fall Apart* as a foundational text in the literary construction of Nigerian history, and *Sunset at Dawn* as a more distanced articulation of the ethnic difference which manifested in the Nigerian-Biafran war. *Things Fall Apart* in particular displays a very deep entanglement of spaces, plots, and characters. Okonkwo, Nwoye, and the outcasts represent instances of border negotiations. Okonkwo’s life exposes a compulsion to border fixity; he totally rejects the colonialist and insists on “proper situatedness”. At the point of ultimate rejection of the new tradition, evident in his suicide, my analysis shows how he becomes the stranger which he resists. Umuofia denies him because he has become morally strange to them, having been made impure by his suicide. Nwoye presents an opposite process of bordering in contrast to Okonkwo, his father. He moves from the traditional to the modern through a process that exposes him at one time as a borderland dweller living at the split space. With the overwhelming experience of twins thrown into the evil forest and the killing of his friend Ikemefuna, Nwoye responds to the pull

to cross through the traditional divide with the colonial religion. In *Things Fall Apart*, colonisation catalyses already existing tensions in the community into full border crossings. The colonial invasion is central to the tensions that emerge in relation to identity and the coercive instatement of boundaries. Colonial incursion introduces different forms of displacement – the outcast displaces the freeborn, the weak the strong – and the dispossession of power that brings about disharmony in the Umuofia community. Additionally, the arbitrary division of Nigeria by colonial powers was one of the precursors of the Biafran conflict, which I discussed as ethnic border.

Ike's *Sunset at Dawn* not only presents inter-ethnic conflicts, it also continues the challenge of “proper situatedness” in relation to ethnic belonging. Dr Kanu's headiness about remaining a Biafran and guarding Biafra's boundaries is similar to Okonkwo's and Mr Smith's insistence on an impermeable border in *Things Fall Apart*. These characters exemplify the “feelings of exclusivity” that result in conflict and death in the case of Okonkwo and Dr Kanu. However, Ike uses characters such as Fatima, Halima, and Bassey to challenge border fixity. With these characters, he ridicules the use of war and violence as solutions to ethnic conflict. Ike collapses boundaries and suggests ethnic de-territorialisation. *Things Fall Apart* and *Sunset at Dawn* expose the need to rethink material and symbolic border fixity. By examining the movement along cultural, national, and ethnic landscapes, the texts conceptualise lived experience and opt for an epistemic shift that accepts a logic that does not rely on absolutes. Though some critics of colonial amalgamation are very pessimistic about Nigerian unity, *Things Fall Apart* and *Sunset at Dawn* problematise exclusivity and point to the possibility of border inclusivity where belonging ceases to be defined within the paradigm of natal and physical territory alone.

Historically, the oil boom of the early 1970s occurred after the civil war, and played a very significant role in the creation of class difference in Nigeria. This is because the excess money in circulation during the oil boom led to more industrial cities and subsequently caused massive migration into the expanding cities from the rural areas and from outside Nigeria. Furthermore, the mishandling of the excess national revenue by the democratic government brought the military government into power. The leadership of the military government was further characterised by dictatorial violence and intimidation of all kinds. Hence, most Nigerian novels within this historical period are set in the physical space of the city, and in the temporal space of socio-economic and socio-political inequality. The writers of this era challenged the economic and political malfeasance of the elites. Writers such as Iyayi and Ndibe, as shown in Chapter Three, paid particular attention to the economic and political divides etched on the

material spaces and everyday existence of the characters. They portrayed the functioning of the class border, its conscious construction, and its management. With Iyayi's *Violence* and Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*, I examined the class border as an institution which, like every other institution, is controlled by rules set by the social and political elites. Based on the conceptual framework of the border as an institution where contacts are mediated, I argued that violence in the forms of exploitation, rape, and denial of voice are tools for socio-economic and socio-political border control in the respective geographical and symbolic spaces of the city and interclass interface. In the process of negotiating this controlled border, the lower class encounter strategically instituted top-down resistance that hinders border permeability.

Contrary to the forced inclusion seen in the second chapter (the Umuofia and the Biafrans are forced into colonialism and into Nigeria), class difference demonstrates the situation of forced exclusion. Idemudia, Adisa, Bukuru, Iyese, and the prostitutes are exploited and forced to remain outsiders. Examining the complex dynamics and functioning of class bordering, I discussed the class border at two levels of interaction, namely intra-class and the interclass interactions. The former depicts the deprivation or the excesses of the classes. The latter, interclass interaction, which occurs at points of exchange (in the streets, the parks, the hospitals, the chalets), is characterised by economic, physical, psychological, and corporeal exploitation. I also argued that interclass interaction shows sexual and corporeal violence present in the performance of power. The upper class invites (or even traps) the underprivileged from the 'there' of their poverty into their own 'here' of affluence. Obofun and Queen invite Adisa and Idemudia to lavishly decorated houses and hotels, and the ministers bring the prostitutes to their extravagant parties. This movement across the class border shows the power dynamic at play between the classes. The movement also depicts the instrumentalisation of the marginalised, an instrumentalisation which invites either a compliant or resistant reaction. In some cases, the lower class compromise the border (mostly corporeal) due to the need for survival. Examples of this include Idemudia's sale of his blood, Adisa's succumbing to rape, and Iyese's prostitution. In some other cases, they assert a bottom-up pressure on border control by resisting and rejecting adverse forms of border control and violence. Their resistance challenges the hegemony of the elites and tends to initiate social change.

Unlike Iyayi's *Violence*, *Arrows of Rain*, as satirical text, interrogates the power at play in the binaries of perpetrator/victim, government/citizen, and military/civilian. It strips the government's action of its pretence and presents the state as embodying violence and weaponising difference against the weak. By presenting the paradox of parasitism and

criminalisation of the prostitutes by the same privileged state, Ndibe questions the moral standing of the perpetrator of violence who is charged with controlling class borders. He uses the trope of prostitution to draw attention to the marginalised masses, as well as to metaphorise the political class as offensive to moral values. The denial of voice is another dimension of domination particularly and clearly foregrounded in Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*.

Violence and *Arrows of Rain* show that negotiating identity in the city is interdependent. This claim is exemplified by the commingling of bodies at physical and symbolic levels. I contended that rape, in particular, is a corporeal transgression and a violent performance of difference designed to exclude, eliminate, or silence the violated. It is such structural forms of violence that Iyayi and Ndibe, as well as some other second-generation writers, respond to. By using the tropes of unskilled labour and prostitution, Iyayi and Ndibe emphasise positionality in the class spectrum and the victimisation that imposes the status of physical, social, and political outcasts on the less privileged. Using these tropes, the authors humanise their object of representation and reduce the space between the reader and their objects of representation in an empathetic gaze. They also challenge class borders and border management that enforces violent class interaction and exclusivity.

In Chapter Four, I presented the historical underpinning that influenced the location of third-generation writing, as well as the thematic preoccupation of this generation. I showed that most of the writers of this period relocated to the West due to the escalation of dictatorship, the dire economic situation in the country, and globalisation. Relocation to the West promoted the creativity and increased the international visibility of Nigerian writers. On the other hand, it necessitated direct encounters with racism and the subsequent negotiation of the racial boundaries which I explicated in Chapter Four. Encounters with Western liberality contributed to the third-generation writers' unapologetic challenge of hegemonic social structures within and beyond our national borders. Both writers who write from the West and those resident in Nigeria lend their voice to criticise marginalisation. Discussing some selected texts in this era as border narratives – *Americanah*, *Night Dancer*, and *Born on a Tuesday* – I showed how these texts challenge border exclusivity in their narration of the processes of moving in and out of racial, gender, and religious marginal positions.

As a transnational text and a border narrative, *Americanah* traces the trajectory of racial border dwelling, navigation, and resistance. Ifemelu and Obinze, particularly, exhibit a migration cycle that involves emigration, encounter, and return. Through them, I analysed the details of the migration cycle as an imaginary topography of movement that involves three levels of

border crossings. First is the transnational border crossing that is both physical and temporal. It is physical and temporal in the sense of crossing geopolitical territorial lines within a given time. The second level is epistemological and symbolic. This involves the migrants' encounter with racial codifications, moments of compliance, and identity erasure in order to survive as border dwellers in the unbalanced racial confluence. For some migrants, like Ifemelu and Obinze, this level includes an inevitable unfolding that calls into consciousness a new form of becoming. They connect to the power within the marginalised racial subject in an awakening that challenges racial positionality. Lastly, I show that re-crossing the racial border is either symbolic or physical. The former plays out in the gestures that reject conformity for survival, while the latter is a radical decision to physically re-cross the transnational border and embrace the opportunities the home country offers.

Night Dancer and *Born on a Tuesday* present similar processes of bordering and border crossing, but in terms of gender and religion. The representation of the character's navigation of the gender border in *Night Dancer* is typical of contemporary Nigerian novelists' challenge of hegemonic positions. Ezi's decision for radical independence, manifest in her exclusion of both her biological and marital family, is one form of crossing beyond the limits set by gender stereotypes. Unigwe, however, proposes another form of gender border crossing that transcends the former. She realises this second form of gender crossing in Mma, who is presented as a borderland character, a symbol of inclusion of the borders. Mma accepts the reconnection with the significant males in her life on one hand, and retains the independence her mother bequeathed her on the other.

Born on a Tuesday not only presents the struggle to negotiate identity along the tense religious border, it also exposes fanatical religious borders as a disease that threatens society. In the text, the adverse religious border is seen as a national (global) challenge fuelled by political greed, irrational divisive policies, and dysfunctional leadership systems. The child who is caught up in this web of crisis, coupled with his/her economic condition, becomes a victim whose border negotiation results in a cycle of violence – at the other end of the spectrum from self-actualisation. In this cycle, the child, having been traumatised and violated, becomes a traumatiser and violator. There is also an aspect of transnationalism in *Born on a Tuesday*, with the idea of the religious insurgency supported by the international network of insurgent groups such as Al Qaeda and ISIS.

Adichie, Unigwe, and John's respective representations of race, gender, and religion are an integral part of border rethinking that stresses the divisive effect of social constructs. These

authors showed that social constructs create imaginary topographies along which movements are restricted, and characters negotiate their identity either in compliance or resistance to the border. Adichie, Unigwe, and John typified the third-generation writers' concentration on challenging the reduction of the individual to the status of goods by racial, gender, and religious oppression; goods which are part of the flows and exchanges of transnational transaction.

In general, the different borders examined in this thesis have certain attributes in common. They show that the violently controlled border has the tendency of eclipsing or eliminating the marginalised. Secondly, these borders have corporeal dimension, or they are performed on the body and mostly on the body of the less privileged in the dynamics of the border. Okonkwo, Dr Kanu, Halima, Idemudia, Adisa, Bukuru, Iyese, Ifemelu, Obinze, Rapu, Mma, Dantala, and Jibril represent different embodied versions of the violence of socio-cultural and political constraints and inequality. The transgression of the corporeal space in these characters calls for serious attention to the violent nature of power and dominance. These borders also reveal that experiences such as loss, deprivation and victimhood are closely associated with identity negotiation and territorial assertion. Okonkwo's loss of his son, his tradition, and an opportunity to greatness; Biafrans' loss of relatives in the Pogrom; Bassey's loss of his family; Fatima's loss of her son and husband; Idemudia's deprivation of food; Ifemelu's invisibility; Mma's loss of her mother – all these contribute to making the characters more insistent about their identity and belonging.

Historicising borders in Nigerian novels allows a scholarly contribution to border studies from the Nigerian (African) literary perspective. The analysis reinforces the representation of spatio-social borders, showing how borders function in relation to individual or group assertions of identity. Nigerian novels analysed as border fiction present borders as contested and transformative spaces through the representation of national, societal, transnational, and cultural bordering and border crossings. By historically locating borders, my study questions, amongst other things, the feelings of exclusivity manifest in a human attachment to natal territories and the institutionalisation (as well as weaponisation) of difference. Furthermore, bringing the Nigerian writings into a transgenerational conversation that presents a diachronic history of continuous but varied forms of bordering, achieves a foregrounding of the trajectory of Nigerian history as a succession of oppressive social borders. By examining the exclusionary effect of divides in the three generations of Nigerian literary writings, I argue that there is an urgent need to promote national and global citizenship in this era of national (global) unrest, insurgency, and insecurity.

Through this focus, the study calls for a deemphasising of difference that takes into consideration the need for national cohesion, as well as individual emancipation. I propose an approach to the border that embodies the spirit of African communitarianism in what I term “border inclusivity”. Border inclusivity is the reverse of the feeling of exclusivity that Newman explains in the opening quote of this concluding chapter. Newman believes that “overcom[ing] feelings of exclusivity” is directly related to accepting the other “to cross the border and to interact with [us]” (Newman, “Borders and Bordering” 177). Thus, the idea of border inclusivity projects a need to transform borders into frontier spaces of positive encounter, interaction, and exchange. Border inclusivity requires a delinking from the mentality of territorial and social superiority that associates borders with oppressive power. It calls for the acceptance of the relativity of morality and truth. Border inclusivity is achievable through an understanding of the other that leads not merely to tolerance but to acceptance of the other, an acceptance of the unity and strength that subsist in diversity. To achieve inclusive difference, there is a need for a reawakening of the consciousness for human dignity.

This study has contributed in some ways to scholarly research. It contributes to literary studies in Nigeria by bringing, in an extended way and for the first time, Nigerian novels across generations into conversation within the framework of border poetics. Newly published texts such as *Born on a Tuesday* are placed in conversation with seminal works such as *Things Fall Apart* as they envision the details and processes of alterity at the border. On another note, examining the process of interactions across physical and social locations foregrounds the unique ability of narrative to capture the functional and complex aspect of the border, an essential contribution to border studies. This study further suggests ways in which the conventional understanding of the border as “physical territorial lines of separation” (“Borders and Bordering” 173) may be seen from the symbolic perspective. Reimagining the border in this sense underscores Newman’s argument that borders “are not always played out through the construction of physical and visible walls and fences. ... [When] I define you as belonging to a different social, ethnic, economic or religious group and, as such, I have created a border separating the self from the other” (Newman, “Borders and Bordering” 177). Furthermore, engaging border from the literary perspective encourages the collapsing of disciplinary boundaries which border critics foresee as an advancement in border studies.

I suggest that a more diversified interdisciplinary interest in border studies is necessary in the present moment of extreme pluralisation of people, places, and identities. Border poetics, which I describe as literature’s intervention in border studies, informs a better understanding

of the interactions between real-life relationships where any form of privilege assertion is involved. The evidence of the symbolic border can be used to extrapolate the different forms of conflict and subjugation in our contemporary time. Historical conflicts in Africa, such as the Nigerian civil war, Apartheid, and the Rwandan genocide, for instance, are examples of the brutality of the rigid border that continues to haunt the present moment. Hence, border studies and border poetics enable analysis and understanding of such core problems facing Africa (and the world), and also present possible solutions to these problems.

Though my study focused specifically on Nigerian literature, there is still much to be done, given that the selected texts were limited to the novel form alone. Hence, exploring how other genres such as poems, plays, short stories, science fiction, films, and artworks fit into the discourse of border poetics and border aesthetics offers a possible extension of this study. Further, the themes studied under each generation are heuristically selected, and so they do not cover all the themes pertinent to the given generations. Further studies may, therefore, explore other important themes such as age, education and citizenship, to examine what they lend to the study of difference. My discussion of the divides has concentrated on the traditional binaries, meaning that it can be extended to other categories of identity in relation to these major binaries. For instance, further studies could consider other forms of ethnic, racial, gender, and sexual orientations, which are all forms of borders. It could also consider examining the place of fiction in border ethnographic study – that is, applying border theory to works that narrate lived experiences at the actual physical borders (internal and external) of the country. All these studies on the border should not only describe the physical and symbolic topography of difference, they should critically investigate the impact of borders on individual and group identities and affiliation. They should aim at meeting one of the challenges of border scholarship which is “to acquire, and actively promote, an understanding of the processes through which all types of borders can be opened even further and how they can be crossed with greater ease” (Newman, “Borders and Bordering” 183). These studies must continue to explore the possibility of common humanity where borders exist only as lines of identity indications but not as limitations to crossings and meaningful existence.

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